

**NARRATIVES OF SAMOAN WOMEN  
WHO ESTABLISHED  
*A'OGA AMATA*  
IN  
CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND**

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by Joeana Togiaso

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## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to two powerful and inspirational Samoan women.

### *Mum*

A strong believer in family, God's goodness, Fa'aSamoa and serving people with a smile.  
I hope to carry on your legacy leaving pockets of alofa in the world for others  
and to stand up for the things that really matter in life.

**Pepe Melania Fagasā**  
**(Sunrise 1936    Sunset 2014)**

### *Grandma*

Thank you for everything you taught me about 'really' listening to people,  
taking the time to be with the ones you love and to make juicy fruit clicks.  
Miss your smile and loving pinches.

**Tali'ilagi Vaiaopo Fanene**  
**(Sunset 1990)**

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*Philippians 4:13*

***‘I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me’***

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## **DEFINITIONS OF TERMS**

For the purposes of this study, the following descriptions of terms will apply.

***‘Pasifika’*** will be used as a generic term rather than a definitive term and incorporates people whose ethnicity includes Samoa, Tonga, Niue, Cook Islands, Tokelau, Fiji, Tuvalu, Kiribati, Vanuatu, Hawaii, American Samoa; New Zealand-born Samoans, and New Zealand-born Pasifika people.

***‘Samoan’*** includes Samoan people who are born anywhere in the world that are of Samoan ancestry.

***‘A’oga Amata’*** is a licensed Samoan Early Childhood education centre.

***‘Language nest’*** is a Pasifika education and care centre that is not licensed

***‘Fa’aSamoa’*** refers to the Samoan way of life, customs, traditions and culture.

***‘Gagana Samoa’*** refers to the Samoan language

***‘Tautua’*** refers to Samoan service or acts of serving ones family, church or community.

***‘Alofa’*** is the Samoan term for love

***‘Fa’aaloalo’*** is the Samoan term to show respect and deference

***‘Aiga’*** is the Samoan term for family

***‘Tamaiti’*** is the Samoan term for children

***‘Palagi’*** is the Samoan term for European/ Western person or people

***Fa’alavelave’*** is the Samoan term for family obligation regarding an important occasion

***‘Teu le vā’*** is the Samoan concept that means to look after the space and relationship between people

***poutu*** is the Samoan word for the main *pou* (poles) that upholds the traditional structure of a Samoan house. This term is used to refer to the main *pou* of *Fa’aSamoa* values.

## **ACRONYMS**

<b>ECE</b>	Early Childhood Education
<b>PECCs</b>	Pasifika Education Care Centres
<b>MOE</b>	Ministry of Education
<b>NZ BORN</b>	New Zealand born

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## **ABSTRACT**

This qualitative study explored the lived experiences of seven Samoan women who became involved in establishing *A'oga Amata* (licensed Samoan early childhood centres) in Christchurch, New Zealand. A foundation of Pasifika epistemologies comprising *talanoa*, *teu le vā* and *Fa'aSamoa* was used to validate Pasifika ways of knowing as essential forms of knowledge to be used in research for, and by, Pasifika peoples. Western theories of Womanism and critical race theory were also used to support this Pasifika foundation. Every researcher's life shapes both the question and approach to research. Therefore, the thesis begins with self-narratives from the researcher, supporting the methodology of autoethnography to add depth and richness to the data. The findings revealed that women's actions were influenced by their values of *Fa'aSamoa*, cultural beliefs and social motivators of hope and fear within the New Zealand context. Samoan women were *poutu* (the main pole) that upheld family, church and work within *A'oga Amata* (licensed Samoan early childhood centres). As immigrants from Samoa, women overcame challenges as a minority culture; and created new spaces for Samoan families. With the support of the church, *A'oga Amata* became a place of cultural transmission, a place of belonging and also a place where women experienced new confidence, leadership roles and higher status within their own homes, churches and community. Unfortunately, colonial incursions of licensing regulations, teacher qualifications and western ideals of quality teaching undermined the work that was created by these pioneering women. These findings reveal serious implications for *A'oga Amata* where language, culture and the identity of Samoan children in New Zealand is threatened and lost if cultural incursions continue to exist. The narratives of Samoan women who established *A'oga Amata* in Christchurch are an inspiration to the whole Samoan community and early childhood community.

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

Each chapter begins with a personal narrative. These narratives appear in a different font to the main chapter.

### **Narrative 1: My own involvement in *A'oga Amata***

I was born and raised at the bottom of Aotearoa in Murihiku (Invercargill) where my parents settled after leaving their home in Samoa in the 1960s to start a 'better life' in New Zealand. My house was always full of the hustle and bustle of family and friends from Samoa who needed a place to stay. Mum and dad worked very hard to buy a house, help to establish the Pacific Island Presbyterian church while providing for my family. "Work hard - use your head and not your hands" was what my parents drummed into my brothers and sisters heads. My parents made sure that we received a good education so that we could get a good job that didn't involve manual labour. After a challenging start to school and an on-going identity crisis (that I learnt to hide well), I did work hard at school and learnt to 'use my head' the *Palagi* way. I finished high school, completed an Arts degree, a Diploma in History and a teaching degree in early childhood education. I ended up settling in Christchurch with my husband Atapana and our three daughters Vevesi, Jarise and Ana.

My journey in *A'oga Amata* began when our first daughter entered the world in 1998. My mother in law nana Vevesi asked if she could take our daughter Vevesi (Junior) to her church Samoan language nest that they had set up in their church hall. My daughter loved going with her nana to the Samoan language nest and this became part of our weekly routine. When my second daughter Jarise was 8 months old, I also started taking her to the language nest where I later became involved as a parent helper. This grew into a teaching position at the *A'oga Amata* when it became licensed in 2001. I worked in the Under 2s area for five years until Jarise started Primary school and my third daughter Ana was born in 2006. I then moved to a job supervising at another Pasifika centre for three years until I started teaching at University of Canterbury, College of Education in 2009.

Thinking back about my time at *A'oga Amata*, I have many fond memories. I was lucky to work and study at the same time, equipping myself with the necessary knowledge and skills required for teaching young children. I loved the courses and the challenging critical learning environment at Teachers College. My passion for early childhood blossomed at *A'oga Amata* and I finally felt that I belonged to a place of learning. I can remember that there was one teacher that had a teaching degree and two other teachers that had teaching diplomas. I admired these 'superwomen' that volunteered their time to work long and hard hours to set up the

language nest in the church hall and then the *A'oga Amata* when it became licensed. The stories that these women shared about their humble beginnings at *A'oga Amata* were empowering, inspirational and at times heart breaking. The *alofa* and passion that Samoan women had for setting up a place of learning for their children and *Fa'aSamoa* values was obvious. This sometimes meant that some women had to catch one or two buses to get to work, had other paid jobs to support their families and balanced other commitments they had at church and within the community. They were capable of balancing these multiple roles to ensure that their children were part of this special place of learning and their families were taken care of.

During the licensing period of *A'oga Amata*, I observed a lot of challenges, sweat and tears from staff that enabled the centre to become established. I was present during times when there were government agencies, organisations and specialists that provided 'help' to the *A'oga Amata*. I was appalled at times due to the lack of positive support or the 'tone' in which some of these so called 'experts' worked with us teachers. It was if there was an unspoken culture of the centre being one of a low quality and lacking in professionalism before these 'experts' even entered the main gates.

There was one occasion when I questioned ERO officers about the 'quality' they were looking for in our centre. I believed that the quality they were looking for was not one that reflected the centre philosophy, culture and 'heart' of *A'oga Amata*. Our centre Supervisor did not want any confrontation or issues created from my concerns so out of respect for her and my teaching colleagues I let my concerns go but deep in my heart I felt robbed. I had the feeling I had in my gut when my dad gave me the "it's OK...it's better than nothing" look when he was mistreated by someone.

It is this very reason that I wanted to document the stories of women that worked in *A'oga Amata* so that future generations will know what these women did to establish these centres. These stories are in honour of the work that has been done in places that do not get recognition in an education system that is based on the dominant Western and Eurocentric culture of Aotearoa. Samoan women were marginalised (and still are) by their race, their gender and their culture but made it through many challenges to establish *A'oga Amata* in Christchurch. My hope is that my own children and future generations to come will learn from these women and their experiences as much as I have.

## **Introduction**

This thesis explores the experiences of 7 Samoan women that were involved in the establishment of *A'oga Amata* (Samoan early childhood centres) in Christchurch. The impetus for this study came from my own journey as a parent helper and teacher at one *A'oga Amata*. As a New Zealand born Samoan woman I became empowered by women that endured many barriers and challenges to successfully establish Samoan language nests and licensed *A'oga Amata* centres in Christchurch. These narratives of Samoan women pioneers have not yet been told in Christchurch; hence need to be part of the history of Samoan early childhood education in New Zealand. Without these key women pioneers, *A'oga Amata* would not have been established. Qualitative face to face to face interviews were used within a Pasifika foundation of epistemologies of *talanoa*, *teu le vā*, *Fa'aSamoa* and Western theories of Womanism and Critical race theory. This study used the main methodology of autoethnography, where I included my own self narratives to add strength to the meaning and understanding of women's experiences within *A'oga Amata*.

## **Research Question:**

The research question that informed the present study was: Why did Samoan women establish *A'oga Amata* in Christchurch and how did their experiences impact on their roles as Samoan women?

This research question starts off by making a statement that Samoan women were responsible for the establishment of *A'oga Amata* in the country. There is no question that Samoan women that migrated to New Zealand were the main pioneers that started *A'oga Amata* in Christchurch as well throughout both the South Island and the North Island. This research seeks to examine and understand why these women chose to establish these places of learning. To seek answers to this question requires further exploration into what Samoan women experienced as they settled into this new county and what their social motivations were for their own family and children. This 'why' question also is a personal one for me as I taught at one *A'oga Amata* with my own children. As a New Zealand born Samoan woman, and as someone suffering from 'hybrid diaspora' there were times when I felt that I

belonged at *A'oga Amata* and times when I felt excluded (Luafutu-Simpson, 2006). There were times where I clashed with women at *A'oga Amata* and times that we shared the same vision and passion for teaching. I constantly marvelled at how these women worked hard to establish *A'oga Amata*, even when they were not treated fairly or the “system” did not support the values they had. Asking ‘why’ also is a deeper question than ‘how’ *A'oga Amata* was established, as the motives and rationale behind each woman’s actions can be explored more deeply to make sense of their experiences.

The second part of this question looks at how experiences have impacted on the previous roles that Samoan women had before they became involved in *A'oga Amata*. I questioned how the new roles that women had in New Zealand as parent helpers and teachers within *A'oga Amata*, impacted on the roles that women already had as mothers, homemakers, supporters of the church and as women involved in other paid work.

In this thesis I also explore the opportunities and issues that arose as women were trying to *teu le vā* - to look after the relationships between people and the new spaces they were in. For some women, their new leadership roles in *A'oga Amata* were in tension with expectations associated with more traditional and idealised views of Samoan women’s roles.

### **Structure of the thesis**

Every researcher’s life shapes the both the question and approach to research. This is why I have begun my thesis with my own story and what has shaped my own research journey. At the beginning of each chapter is my own self-narrative that sets the scene for each chapter. My self-narrative supports the autoethnographic methodology of this thesis to share my own experiences relating to each topic or theme. As a new researcher I also wanted to take the reader on my research journey by outlining the struggles and successes I had along the way. Autoethnography is a personal process where I have been able to draw upon my own personal experiences, memories and on-going self-reflection (Chang, 2013). Throughout my thesis I return to my own story using my own narrative as ‘data’.

Chapter One introduces the topic of this research and the impetus behind the choice of this particular topic. It also identifies the key research goals, objectives and a rationale behind the research. Chapter Two provides a literature review which outlines the Pasifika foundation of Samoan epistemologies of *talanoa*, *teu le vā* and *Fa'aSamoa*. This foundation is supported by Critical Race theory and Womanism also chosen for this study. A review of literature explores the traditional and contemporary roles of Samoan women followed by literature that looks at historical and social contexts of Pasifika language nests, *A'oga Amata* and Pasifika organisations. Chapter Three describes the methods and methodology used in this research including the rationale behind the methods and techniques used for gathering information. Pasifika epistemologies that were used to validate and support knowledges are also discussed. Chapter Four introduces all the participants, acknowledging their valuable participation and contribution to this study. Chapters Five and Six seek to answer the first part of the central question: Why Samoan women established *A'oga Amata* within Christchurch? In Chapter Five, the main theme of cultural transmission provides some understanding of the social motivators of fear, loss, prejudice and resistance that impacted on women's involvement. Chapter Six explores the ways that *A'oga Amata* was a place of belonging, an extension of the Samoan village and church for children, family and the community. Samoan women became involved in *A'oga Amata* as they aspired to '*teu le vā*' (look after the space) by protecting and guarding all that was precious and valued by Samoan peoples. Chapter Seven provides further insight into the second part of the main question for this study that looks at how women's experiences of *A'oga Amata* impacted on their roles as Samoan women where *A'oga Amata* was another role added to the multiple roles that they had. Chapter Eight is a final discussion that responds to the main research question of this study with key conclusions that have emerged. Implications and limitations of this study are also discussed in this final chapter.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Narrative 2: The beginning of my research journey**

It has been a long journey finding a research paradigm and theoretical framework that I was comfortable with and one that supported what I wanted my research to do. Just choosing a topic that I was passionate about seemed like the easiest way to start this thesis. I have struggled to find my own way through all the complexities and messiness with my lack of research experience as well as having to structure a thesis that was scholarly acceptable within a Westernised world of academia. What kind of research would capture the stories of women who were and still are marginalised by social class, race, gender and culture in a sensitive yet open way? Would phenomenological, ethnographic or indigenous research encapsulate the voices of women and justify the experiences that they have been through?

I started off writing the literature review for this study using a historical lens of Samoan women and their experiences within *A'oga Amata* in New Zealand. Even though this did highlight the significant gaps within the literature on the topic, a historical lens did not feel like it was doing everything that I wanted to do. I wanted my research to come alive for these women and for me as the researcher. I have been reading and writing 'on and off' for the past two years, hoping that my writing would evolve into something meaningful and magical but without a clear paradigm to begin with has made this task a daunting one.

I eventually discovered that writing from a postmodernist lens meant that I did not have to 'make sense' of everything and parts did not need to connect coherently. All of the complexities that I have experienced and the women that were part of this study have experienced in Samoa and in Aotearoa are part of the complex understandings and intersections of multiple identities that can be fully embraced. These wonderful complexities are also embraced in the theory of Womanism, where women and their stories and experiences can be honoured and respected as they are. As an inexperienced researcher, finally realising that the complexities of making meaning and understanding are part of the research process, journey and possibly findings was very reassuring! The icing on the cake for me was when my supervisor introduced me to autoethnography. The walls that I had created to separate me and my own experiences from the experiences of other women (but to make sense of my own wonderings in the privacy of my own thoughts) came crashing down!

As I write at this time (writing the literature review) I feel emotionally raw. The thoughts of sharing my own stories fill me with an enormous sense of freedom and fear. At first this research was going to be about other Samoan women where I could write about their stories and not my own, but then I am part of this journey

whether I choose to share my stories or not. Just like the multiple identities in my life that do not fit nicely together that I deliberately separate to help me participate in them. I am scared...of opening myself up to the world. As a New Zealand born Samoan woman I am good at hiding my fears and confusion with a smile and a look of quiet compliance. Will I feel comfortable talking about areas of my own upbringing and culture that I have not talked about, have hidden or swept under the carpet? Will I be able to write about my own insecurities and identity crisis living and growing up in a country where I felt that I did not belong? Even when I am back in Samoa surrounded by family I do not feel I fully belong there either. To begin this journey I would need to articulate how I will try and make sense of the narratives and my own story within a chosen research paradigm and theoretical framework. The result of this journey is the following Literature Review chapter.



## **Introduction**

This study supports a vision that many Pasifika researchers have for Pasifika peoples, to use research to meet their cultural roles and obligations (Vaiotele, 2003). This vision is reflected in a question that Vaiotele asks about her own research: "Who is this work going to be useful for?" This study aims to be useful for Samoan women and to benefit the Pasifika community. Therefore it is essential that Pasifika epistemologies and knowledges are at the forefront of this study to support what is valued by Pasifika peoples and the Samoan women that this research is about.

This chapter will discuss the literature that has been reviewed and selected to shed some light on the main research question for this study. The research paradigm chosen for this study validates Pasifika knowledges and world views. Samoan epistemologies make up the foundation of *talanoa*, *teu le vā* and *Fa'aSamoa* where the narratives of Samoan women in this study are used as essential forms of knowledge in this research. Western theories of Womanism and Critical race theory were also part of the theoretical framework. The literature reviewed provide a context for research on Samoan women in New Zealand, an overview of research conducted on *A'oga Amata* and literature that looks at the significant role of the church in the establishment of *A'oga Amata*.

## **Pasifika research paradigm**

Paradigms are based on ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions that people use to make sense of the world (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This study privileges the oral tradition of Pasifika stories and narratives that are regarded as an essential form of knowledge (Pasikale 1996; Mamoe 1999; Tiatia 1998). Vaiotele (2003) argues that Pasifika people have endured many years of disempowering research, with culturally inappropriate patterns of data collection, knowledge and theorising from researchers that are not aware of Pasifika values. Petelo (2003) states that there exists a complex interplay of power and knowledge when researchers are (re)telling the stories of others. Researchers have tried to make sense of these stories and retell them from their own understanding. Western

research approaches fit institutional research conventions but they have little use in Pasifika situations (Vaiotei, 2003).

The following diagram illustrates the Pasifika epistemological framework (Diagram 1) chosen for this study of *talanoa*, *teu le vā* and *Fa'aSamoa*; and the western theories that support this framework of Womanism and critical race theory (CRT).

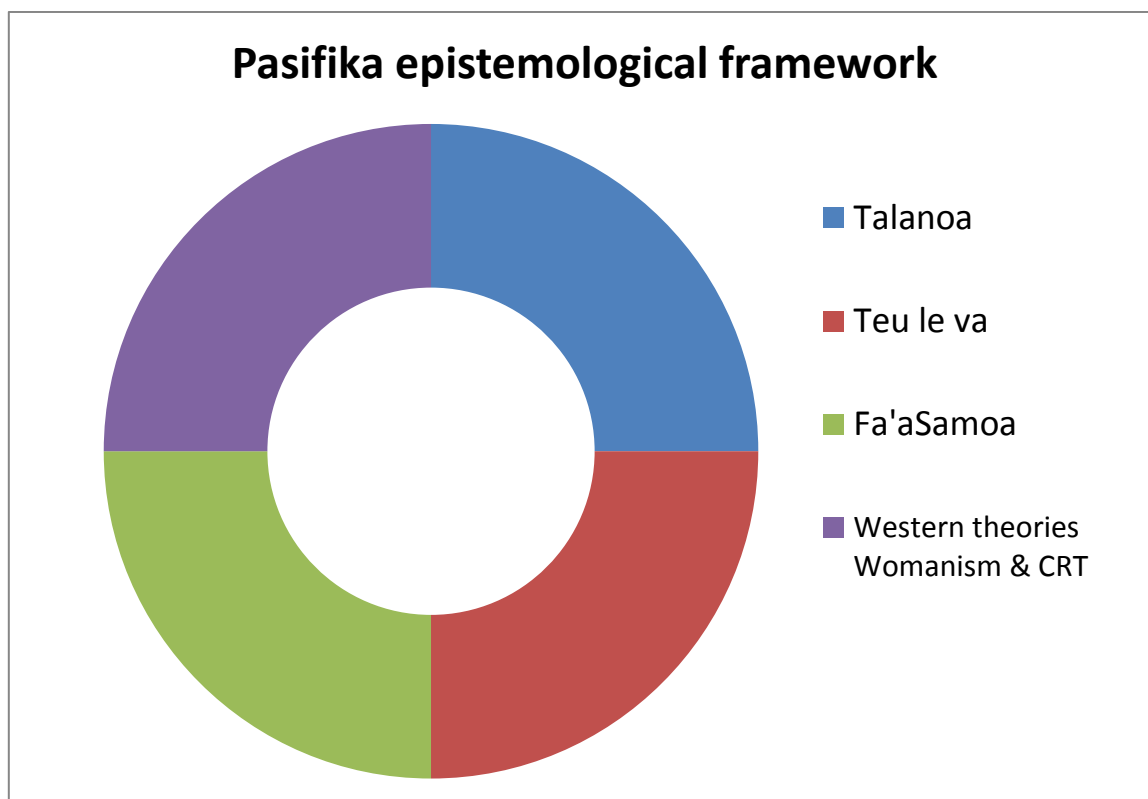


Diagram 1: Pasifika epistemological framework

### **Talanoa**

Vaiotei (2006) has written extensively on *talanoa* as a Pasifika researcher whose work has been used to guide Pasifika research and organisations on communicating with Pasifika peoples for over the past two decades. Vaiotei asserts that *talanoa* has a philosophical base that is collective, that defines and acknowledges Pasifika aspirations while developing and implementing Pasifika epistemologies. Therefore, *talanoa* is an appropriate approach used by Pasifika, for Pasifika people (Ibid, 2006). *Tala* means to ‘inform, talk, tell’ and *noa* means ‘nothing or void’. Here a culturally appropriate setting is created in which the researcher and the researched talk freely, openly, with shared ownership over discussions that are unstructured and face to

face. Vaioleti (2003) states that *talanoa* is therefore more suitable for researching Pasifika issues:

It will allow Pacific peoples to help identify issues; then co-create knowledge and solutions for themselves. Implementation of findings based on Talanoa Research Methodology should be more trustworthy, relevant and widely supported by Pacific peoples, because they feel that they have had meaningful engagement in the research processes (Vaioleti, 2003, pg. 12).

By using *talanoa*, women in this study are given the opportunity to share their stories, to critique their experiences and offer themselves and others a space for transformation. *Talanoa* also offers women the chance to be more involved in the research process, where there is more shared ownership and balance of power over discussions. *Talanoa* is like a narrative inquiry that uses oral, visual, written, visual, and stories to give meaning to experiences (Josselson, 2006). Using the self-narratives of Samoan women as essential knowledge and data for this study also validates *talanoa and teu le vā* (look after the space). It supports the stories and what women have to say as valuable knowledge that can be used for research. Josselson (2006) also asserts that “narrative inquirers engage in intense and transparent reflection...questioning of their own position, values, beliefs and cultural background” (pg. 9). This narrative inquiry fits in with *talanoa* as an intense conversation that questions the positions of all people involved in the research process. The reciprocity between the researcher and participants have the opportunity to add trust and respect into the research, hence because of the relationship that has been developed, quality will be added to the research.

Vaioleti (2006) argues that the researcher will not want to let down participants with whom he or she has developed a relationship. As the researcher, I will strive to establish trust and respect with the participants. *Talanoa* firmly places the power to define what the Pacific issues are within the encounter between the researcher and the participant. Participants will disclose information only when they feel the time is right and within the context appropriate, hence may cease to participate if this *va* (space) between me and the participants is broken. *Talanoa* then as discussed above is also a Pasifika model that encompasses the values of *teu le vā* which is also part of the framework for this study.

## **Teu le vā**

'*Teu le vā*' is defined as a place or site of action in which social interactions are productive to those who are part of the place (Airini, Mila-Schaaf, Coxon, Mara & Sanga, 2010). It also means to keep or look after all the relationships within the space in a harmonious order (Mara, 2013). Relationships are crucial to form collective cohesion for Samoan people (Luafutu-Simpson, 2011). Vaioleti (2006) argues that researchers have a responsibility to both their institutions but particularly to their participants.

They must take into account the possible effect they may have on the participants and act in ways that preserve their dignity...if researching ethically is about respecting human dignity, then it is critical that the process is culturally appropriate for the participants. It is imperative that Pacific research ethics (protocols) emerge from Pacific world views in order to keep synergy with the methodology and to protect the integrity of participants as Pacific cultural beings (pg. 29).

It is important that as the researcher, I use world views that will enable me to *teu le vā* and protect the integrity of the Samoan women that are a part of this research.

Anae (2010) in her article: *Research for better Pacific schooling in New Zealand: Teu le vā – a Samoan perspective*, outlines concerns regarding marginalised Pasifika communities and the need for Pasifika research methodologies, frameworks and models. Her Samoan perspective supports the definitions outlined above. She looks at *teu le vā* as an opportunity to treat all reciprocal relationships as sacred. If relationships were treated as sacred then these relationships would be more valued and nurtured. To *teu le vā* requires that one regards all interactions as sacred in order to value, nurture and, if necessary, tidy up the *va* (space). This highlights the point that *teu le vā* is complex, multi-layered and can come with many challenges. But if all parties have the mind, body and soul for what is at stake then positive outcomes can be achieved (Anae, 2010).

## ***Fa'aSamoa***

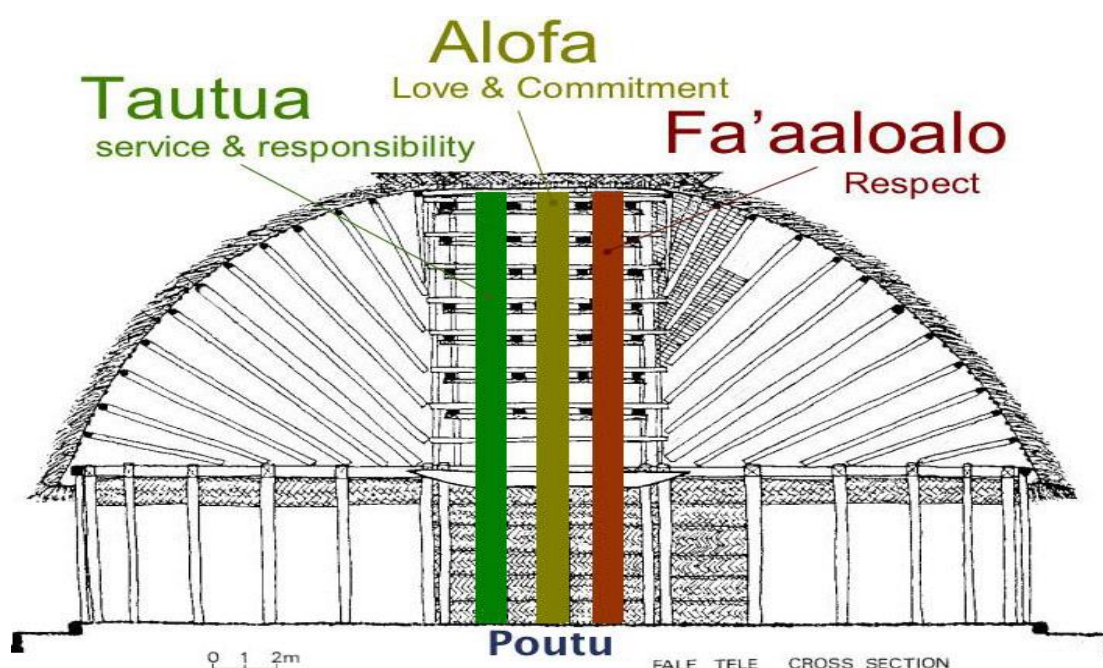
There have been recent discussions and debates on defining *Fa'aSamoa*, but for the purposes of this study it will be described as the Samoan way of life, customs, traditions, and culture that guide the values, actions, behaviour and interactions of

Samoan people. The values of *alofa* (love) service (*tautua*) and *fa'aaloalo* (respect) are what many Samoans say encompasses values of what is important to being Samoan (Silipa, 2008). The way that Samoan women make sense of their experiences will be influenced by their values of *Fa'aSamoa* that guide their thoughts and actions.

### ***Poutu* Model**

I have chosen the *poutu* model (Model 1) (adapted from Samu-Wendt, 2005a) that has been used in a lot of Pasifika research. Following Samu-Wendt, I use *poutu* as the metaphor to illustrate Samoan values of *alofa*, *tautua* and *fa'aaloalo* that underpin *Fa'aSamoa*. The *poutu* is in the centre of the Samoan *fale* (traditional house) that holds the structure up and in place. Like the *poutu*, without the *alofa*, *tautua* and *fa'aaloalo* then *Fa'aSamoa* values would not be strong or can be upheld.

#### Model 1: The *Poutu* Model



(Samu-Wendt, 2005a).

Luafutu-Simpson (2011) looked at appropriate Samoan cultural models for teaching assessment practices. She describes the middle post *alofa* (love and commitment) for teachers as:

the motivating factor behind all that Samoans do...the alofa we hold for our children or students' needs to be at the centre of our practice. A love and commitment to learning is also essential... If we do not have a genuine love and commitment for children and for teaching and learning then we need to consider why we are in this profession (Luafutu-Simpson 2011, pg. 57).

For Samoans, the definition here of *alofa* is more about an attitude of commitment and action of care. This value is not considered “wishy washy” “touch feely” emotions that are sometimes viewed within Western cultures but a commitment and attitude towards the love for one another (Luafutu-Simpson, 2011). *Alofa* then is actioned by *tautua*, the second post that represents service and responsibilities for Samoan peoples. Children are taught how to serve within the family and village at a young age where it becomes a natural way of life. In particular serving elders and looking after younger siblings are some of the responsibilities that young children have. To install the cultural values of *alofa*, *tautua* and *fa'aaloalo* in Samoan children, it is expected that they will in turn serve their Samoan community (Luafutu-Simpson, 2011). The third post *Fa'aaloalo* depicts the way Samoans carry out service and demonstrates the values of respectful relationships. The three traditional values of *alofa*, *tautua* and *fa'aaloalo* are the core values at the heart of *Fa'aSamoa* (Samu-Wendt, 2005a).

This study will use the *Poutu* model as a visual metaphor to understand how these values impacted on Samoan women's aspirations, actions and decisions as they set up language nests and established *A'oga Amata*. This study does not in any way imply that *Fa'aSamoa* values are static or have the same meaning for all Samoan people. For Samoan people that live in Samoa, it is argued that these are traditional values that are at the heart of all Samoan people and what they do (Silipa, 2008).

Silipa (2008, p. 12) explains further:

Fa'aaloalo can mean respect, reverence, courtesy and politeness, and is the core of *tū ma aga fa'atamāli'i* (the traditional characterisation of nobility) which is deemed to be the accepted behaviour pattern ... Furthermore *fa'aaloalo* requires a person to respect the space between others and him/her.

Silipa (2008) is referring to the '*va*' or the space that needs to be respected and looked after, is in '*teu le vā*'. This study argues that historically the colonisation and conversion to Christianity of Samoa were movements that did not adhere to *teu le vā*;

a concept that was part of the Samoan peoples values before Europeans discovered the small island of Samoa in the Pacific (Anae, 2010). This can be seen in the changes of gender roles for women and men in Samoa that opened the doors to patriarchal customs and traditions within *Fa'aSamoa* (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1996; Kremer, 2014; Mara, 2001; Meleisea & Meleisea, 1987).

### **Feminism and Womanism**

This study is about Samoan women therefore it was important to find a theory that supported the narratives of women of colour. My search began with feminist theory and in particular Black feminism. According to Stephens (2016), long before the use of any terminology “Black women used their positions as mother, teacher, sister, wife, friend, and so forth to educate other African Americans in order to survive and thrive in an oppressive state” (pg. 3). From the arrival of the first Africans in America, black women have used early survival characteristics of black women’s activism that have evolved into the overlapping concepts of Black feminism and Womanism (Hooks, 1994).

A crucial aspect of Black feminism has been the use of personal narratives to gain self-awareness and create dialogue with other peoples and communities (Guerrero, 1998). Hooks (1994, 1995), whose work incorporated the concepts of both Black women’s feminism and Womanism, focused her attention on the use of “voice” for members of traditionally marginalized groups. Hooks explained that the use of voice is more than just recounting personal experiences. She stated: “Coming to voice is not just the act of telling one’s own experience. It is using that strategically—to come to voice so that you can also speak freely about other subjects” (Hooks, 1994, pg. 148). Using “voice” in this study of the participants supports the Samoan values of *talanoa*, where everyone’s voice can be shared and heard.

Research on Feminism in the Pacific or by Pasifika women is limited and has either embraced, rejected or re-worked feminist theory. One empowering book *Lalanga Pasifika: Weaving the Pacific* written by Griffen, Maka, Tafunai and Tohiana (2006), is about four NGO (Non-government Organisation) stories of Pasifika women, highlighting the important role that women play in social organisation,

community sustainability and governance in the Pacific Islands. These empowering stories of Pasifika activists illustrate that no significant changes in the Pacific can be made without Pasifika women. Griffen et al. (2006) states that feminism for these Pasifika women “is more likely to be espoused as a communal rather than an individual enterprise, in that when Pacific women become empowered and influential, whole communities can reap the benefits” (pg. 14). The stories are from Tonga about the *Catholic Women’s League* and ‘*Aloua Ma’a Tonga*’, from Samoa about the *Women in Business Foundation* (WIBF) and the *Leitana Nehan Women’s Development Agency* (LNWDA) in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea. All empowering stories reveal how leading Pasifika women have taken into their own hands the challenges of patriarchal leadership, society and institutions and weave together a new and better life for their people.

Researchers such as Pihama & Mara (1994) critiqued early feminist analysis because it did not take into account the origins of colonisation and conversion to Christianity in Pasifika countries during the 19<sup>th</sup> century or how these impacted on Pasifika women’s roles in New Zealand. Māori women activists argued that Pākehā roles dominated all the social institutions in Aotearoa therefore reinforced the inferior position of Māori women (Smith, 1992; Johnston & Pihama, 1995). Colonisation in New Zealand also reinforced the inferior position of all women of colour including Pasifika women (Mara, 2005).

A recent study by George (2010) was conducted in Fiji where 60 women activists were interviewed about the place of feminism in their daily lives. When participants were questioned about how feminism either aided, obstructed or advanced the status of women in Fiji, there was an overwhelming unease about feminism. While participants were comfortable in identifying with feminist goals in private, they expressed concerns about the term being seen as a ‘western discourse’ of gender equality. Participants were also uncomfortable using such terms in public spaces where they felt people misinterpreted what they were trying to say or misinterpret that it is a cause just for women. George (2010) explains further that most participants in Fiji defined issues that related to women as ‘family issues’. They felt that when women suffer, the whole family suffers.



Marsh (1998) wrote an article about her own personal perspective of feminism and the perspectives of other Pasifika women. In 1987 Marsh attended a “Women, Development and Empowerment” workshop with twenty six women from 11 Pacific Island countries. The aim of the workshop was to form a feminist framework for changes and ideals on feminism. She found that attitudes were mainly negative and suspicious. Such criticisms were towards feminism of white liberal middle class feminism representing one race and one class. She sought to find a relevant feminist framework for Pasifika women and looked at the works of feminism with ‘colour’. Marsh found a connection to the definition by Māori women: ‘*Mana wahine*’ (*Mana* – spiritual power and strength and *wahine* meaning woman). Marsh also used ‘*Mana*’ as it is universally Pacific and has much the same meaning for Pasifika as Māori. Marsh decided to use the word ‘*Tama’ita’i*’ which is ‘woman’ in Samoan as there was no universal Pacific term for women. This term has not been widely used by Pasifika women, however the study from Marsh does highlight early conversations by researchers to find a relevant feminist framework for Pasifika women. Marsh also mentions that while many Pasifika women may not be comfortable with feminism or have rejected the concept, Pasifika women have engaged with feminist goals and support the rights for Pasifika women.

Black feminist theory and *Mana tama’ita’i* are valuable resources as discussed, however, it was in the theory of Womanism that I ‘found myself’. This theory was specifically written for women of colour - by women of colour. The renowned poet and activist Alice Walker in 1983 coined the term Womanism in her *Womanist Prose: In Search of Our Mother’s Gardens*. She defined Womanism as:

A woman who loves other women, sexually and/or non-sexually. Appreciates and prefers women’s culture, women’s emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counterbalance of laughter), and women’s strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/or non-sexually. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. Not a separatist, except periodically, for health. Traditionally universalist... Loves music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. Loves the Spirit. Loves love and food and roundness. Loves struggle. Loves the Folk. Loves herself. Regardless (1983, pg. xi).

Guerrero (2003) interpreted Walker’s *Prose* literally and figuratively to mean the restoration of the ‘female principle’ to challenge the “prevailing colonialist and

patriarchal denigration of women and nature...and the denigration of “tribal peoples” according to Western conceptions...” (2003, pg. 67). The colonial and patriarchal denigration comes from the unique historical conditions that indigenous and people of colour have experienced globally around the world. Samoan women have experienced these historical conditions in Samoa and in New Zealand.

Womanism has complex meanings and recognises that “historical conditions have produced a unique set of circumstances for Black Women in particular women of colour in general. This unique set of circumstances, created by the convergence of racism, sexism, and poverty, has yielded certain forms of consciousness and repertoires of skills that any and all occupying such a position ostensibly would have developed” (Phillips, 2006, pg. xli). Womanism is part of a history that celebrates the ways that African women got through many challenges. In turn, Womanism can also celebrate the ways that Samoan women got through many challenges.

Walker (1983) described the difference of Womanism and Feminism as: “Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender” (1983, pg. xii). This means that both theories are about women’s rights but Womanism is focused on black women and all women of colour. Womanism is also committed to the survival and wholeness of all people, including men, rather than supporting separatism, Womanism seeks to reconcile differences with all people. Womanists try to work together to make things work for them as Hudson-Weems explains:

The Africana womanist...perceives herself as the companion to the Africana man, and works diligently towards continuing their established union in the struggle against racial oppression. Within the Africana culture there is an intrinsic, organic, equality that has always been necessary for the survival of the Africana culture, in spite of the individual personal problems of female subjugation that penetrated the Africana family structure as a result of White male cultural system (Hudson-Weems, 2006, pg. 41).

This connects with the values of *Fa’aSamoa* (Samoan way of life) and *tatua*, (service) *fa’aaloalo* (respect) and *alofa* (love) that serve to benefit the whole *aiga* (family), *nu’u* (village) and community. According to Phillips (2006), “A womanist is triply concerned with herself, other Black women, and the entire Black race, female and male—but also all humanity, showing an ever-expanding and ultimately universal arc of political concern, empathy and activism” (pg. xxiii).

For Pasifika the emphasis on complementary roles rather than competitive roles is the aim. Pasifika have a social structure that has reciprocal relations in different forms (Marsh, 1998). Womanism theory potentially provides a framework for Samoan women, like African women, to tell their own stories, to start where they are and celebrate their multiple identities and in-betweenness of their being. This study will also look at the creative ways that Samoan women navigated their way through the challenges they faced to establish *A'oga Amata* in Christchurch. This is part of Pasifika history in New Zealand that needs to be acknowledged and celebrated.

### **Critical Race theory**

This study is also about race hence critical race theory (CRT) was chosen to critique social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic and gender values (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002 cited in Zou & Trueba, 2002). Critical theory began in the 1970s as a movement in the law in America, and spread to other disciplines such as Education. CRT ideas have been used to understand “issues of school discipline and hierarchy, tracking, affirmative action, high stakes testing, controversies over curriculum and history, and alternative and charter school” (Delgado & Stefanic, 2012, pg. 6).

CRT is committed to social justice to eliminate “racial oppression as a broad goal of ending all forms of oppression” (Delgado & Stefanic, 2012, pg. 21). Using CRT is useful in revealing structures of power that are grounded in social and historical routines. In this study, I use CRT to help understand and explain how women were a part experiences that included racial oppression. The basic tenets of CRT that Delgado and Stefanic (2012) uses that this study draws upon are summarised as:

1. Racism is ordinary – the common experience of people of colour which is embedded in the structure and system of society.
2. The system of white supremacy serves important purposes for the dominant group both mentally and socially. The first point means that racism is not acknowledged or the treatment of equality for everyone across the board is sufficient for all people. The second point argues that the system benefits the dominant culture – those who are white and middle class.

3. Races and race is the product of social construction, thought and relation.
4. Race alone cannot account for the oppression of people. *Intersectionality* is the term used within CRT to recognise the multidimensionality of oppressions regarding race, sex, class, national origin, and sexual orientation. These last two elements draw attention to the multiple oppressions facing people of colour that account for inequality (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p.21).

CRT has used the power of life stories to understand how people view race especially people who experience oppression. Autobiographies have been one way that people have shared these experiences with others and this study builds on my own stories of experiences within *A'oga Amata* and the stories of other Samoan women. This opens the door to alternative realities (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012), such as the realities of these Samoan women. These stories that offer alternative realities is relevant to this study as it fits in with *talanoa* where women can create meaning and understanding for themselves and others. Their voices are used as essential and meaningful data for this study.

This study looks at why Samoan women became involved in *A'oga Amata*, and also how their experiences impacted on their roles as Samoan women. In order to answer the second part of this question, it is important to look at the roles of Samoan women historically and how these have changed over time impacting on roles of women today. There is much research to support the changes that occurred to the roles of Samoan women during colonisation and the time of Samoa's conversion to Christianity.

### **Colonisation and Christianity in Samoa**

Fairbairn-Dunlop (1996) claims that in pre-colonial times, the behaviour of every Samoan woman was guided by ideals of *tautua* and *mamalu* and their "their satisfaction comes from knowing they are serving their family" (pg. 15). This type of service did not equate with dependency or marginalization – but instead indicated a fierce spirit of independence and self-reliance.

A number of Pasifika researchers (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1996; Kremer, 2014; Mara, 2001; Meleisea & Meleisea, 1987) argue that there were no cultural patriarchies

within *Fa'a Samoa* prior to European contact. Colonisation and the conversion to Christianity was the beginning of the power of the dominant culture over people in particular women in Samoa (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1996, Meleisea & Meleisea, 1987). The roles of Samoan women before European contact were represented by two particular roles of 'sister' and 'wife'. 'Sisters' had a higher rank than 'brothers' and were a highly valued status group in the village. They had first preference to seating arrangements and separate sleeping quarters. *Taupou* (daughter of the high chief) another associated sister role was held in high esteem, with the 'aualuma' (unmarried girls and women) who had the job to host and entertain village guests and maintenance of the village (Meleisea & Meleisea, 1987). If women had a matai (chief) as a husband, then she became a 'faletua' (wife of the high chief meaning 'back of the house') and took on the role of wife different to that of 'sister'.

According to Meleisea and Meleisea (1987) the arrival of the English missionaries from 1830 onwards brought about radical changes in the two main roles of women. Missionaries promoted the sanctity of marriages, of parents living together and the mother's role in raising the children. The missionaries wanted to "replicate their middle-class values in Samoa...the man was the breadwinner and the woman the home-maker. This included dictating to Samoan peoples how they should present themselves in public, in their dress and hair arrangement" (pg. 32). There became a restriction of the *taupou* and the *aualuma* where today they are only used for ceremonial purposes. Mission education also separated areas for boys and girls where women were encouraged to support education. Wives for ministers became a desirable role for women with high status within the village (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1996). Again it is important to highlight here that patriarchies did not exist within the Samoa pre-colonisation and conversion to Christianity. The change in the roles of men and women and the western hierarchy of these certain roles led to Samoan women being treated as inferior with a lower status compared to men as seen in Western societies. Mara (2001) argues that colonisation and conversion to Christianity in Samoa and throughout the Pacific during the 19th Century impacted on the traditional roles of women that continue to affect women's roles in Aotearoa today.

This reinforced the inferior social position of women relative to men. In addition, the mythologies that had been handed down in traditional songs and legends about strong female ancestors and their active roles in the survival of Polynesian cultures were rendered absent or marginalised (Mara, 2001, pg. 39).

There is not much research that explicitly looks at patriarchy in Samoa and within *Fa'aSamoa*. However, many researchers do admit that there are inequalities that started after colonisation in regards to gender. This gap in the research raises the question why these inequalities are not explicitly talked about. Are Samoan people uncomfortable to question the inequalities that exist within *Fa'aSamoa*? Do Samoan people think that revealing the inequalities goes against the values of *Fa'aSamoa* of *alofa*, *tautua* and *fa'aaloalo*? This study supports the view that patriarchy in Samoan culture results in the oppression of Samoan women because of the hierarchy in Samoan society that places men higher on the social scale.

Kremer (2014) is one researcher that has written explicitly about the inequalities of the Samoan culture and in particular the inequalities of gender relations and religious freedom. Kremer argues that Christianity was accepted by *fa'amatai* (chief system) as it cemented the power chiefs had and created a divinely justified hierarchy. This hierarchy was altered in the new Samoan society placing women considerably lower on the scale which was justified by *fa'amatai* (chief system) and their interpretations of the bible. For instance in Percival's study, one chief stated: "I don't believe there are women's rights, and I base that view on the bible" illustrates how some male chiefs interpreted the bible and viewed women (Percival, 2013, pg. 46). This hierarchy can be clearly seen in the political, religious and matai systems of Samoa that consists of low numbers of women within the political realm, as church ministers and as matai (chiefs).

Macpherson and Macpherson's (2012) study looked at how globalisation is slowly changing Samoan society. An emergence of public critique of mainstream churches where Samoans are not accepting what their churches or *fa'amatai* (chief system) dictate illustrate the rise of new church denominations and faith religions. This exposes an awareness of a growing sense of injustices of religious and cultural norms. This also opens up an awareness of how religion and Samoan society essentialises the system and values of *Fa'aSamoa*. *Matai* rule the family, village and

country. Percival (2013) asks whether there is any space to question the dignified authority of the *matai* (chief) or the minister, because this would not only be a personal attack on *fa'amatai* but *Fa'aSamoa*. This could explain why this area is not researched widely or Samoans are not comfortable to openly talk about these taboo topics for fear of being ridiculed or shunned (Percival, 2013).

Palenapa (1993) conducted a study in Christchurch looking at the place of *Fa'aSamoa* in two Samoan churches. Samoan men and women were asked about a women's place and if Samoan women should be working in paid jobs. Palenapa (1993) reported that some people felt that women should be given an equal opportunity to work if women had no children to care for, or if women needed to work for financial reasons and if the father was unable to work. A small group felt that women should not work at all due to their main role being at home to look after the family. Women in the study did not support the views of women having to be at home. These findings are interesting as they highlight the views that men in 1993 had of a women's place being with children at home. It would be interesting to see how these opinions compared to the women that took part in this study.

In 2009, the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs commissioned the School of Population Health at the University of Auckland to conduct a research project to provide insight into preventative strategies for sexual violence in New Zealand. This strength based qualitative study examined Pasifika views of violence, traditional Pasifika prevention methods and Pasifika prevention approaches. Seven Pasifika communities including Cook Island, Fiji, Niue, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Samoa were represented. Even though the focus was on developing pathways for sexual violence prevention, the analysis regarding Samoa and the concept of *feagaiga* of brother-sister relationship as the paradigm for gender roles and relationships proved useful. Percival, Robati-Mani, Powell, Kingi, Peteru and Hope (2010) talk about the *feagaiga* relationships being a covenant between brother and sister – *feagai* meaning opposite within the same space but not in opposition. *Feagaiga* can also include cousins, relatives and children raised within the family.

Tui Atua (2007) describes *feagaiaga* as having roles and responsibilities of peacemaker, intercessor and conciliator of family or village conflicts on behalf of the

family gods. Feagaiga were given high status because of their links with the family gods. When the sacred parts of the feagaiga relationships is acknowledged and respected then harmony exists between brother and sister, husband and wife, father and daughter and uncle and niece (Tui Atua, 2007). This brother- sister relationship underscored the ideal of male and female relationships that extends to non-related males and females and family and society. Tui Atua (2007) further argues that the arrival of the London Missionary Society in Samoa resulted in Malietoa (High Chief of highest status) giving them the status of *fa'afeagaiga*. There are differing views about why this happened. Some Samoan people in this study believed that Malietoa replaced the *feagaiga* status (sisters, wives, aunties, mothers, wives) with *fa'afeagaiga* meaning to be like the sisters. “In the absence of a Samoan indigenous paradigm, the default gender arrangements become models drawn from the bible and western societal norms” (Ibid, pg. 77). Here the birth of gender imbalances between men and women and the confusion of the *feagaiga* relationship provide some answers and further questions, as to how Samoan women have been undermined and mistreated in the past and still are today.

Utumapu (1992) in a study that looked at Samoan parents in New Zealand also discussed how the church dramatically changed the traditional roles for Samoan women. The church also opened up other roles for married and single women such as “Sunday school teaching, choir, youth group, Bible study, deacon hood and the Mafutaga a Tina (the women’s organisation at church)” (pg. 23). The main role model for Samoan women had been the pastor or minister’s wife, who was seen as a leader in her community among the women, because of her education and sophistication. Despite the status and popularity of the minister’s wife, women were considered to be the backbone of the church but this is not noted in much research. Roach (1984), sums up this view:

The mission and the church have given women new public roles in the community. They aid the men in the management of the congregation in general, and take full responsibility for those things of the church which are considered women’s sphere traditionally: the maintenance of the home, decoration, providing food and raising funds (pg. 221).

Samoan women in this study were also the backbone to the establishment of *A’oga Amata*. The church supported them as this was also considered ‘women’s work



(Utumapu, 1998). Before we look closely at the involvement of the church in establishing *A'oga Amata*, we will take a look at research on Samoan women in Aotearoa.

### **Samoan Women in Aotearoa**

There has been more research done in the past two decades on Samoan women as research was focused generally on 'Pacific women' prior to the 1970s. The majority of these have been within the medical and health sectors. There is also an increase in studies on the migration of Samoan women and their experiences in New Zealand as well as comparative studies of New Zealand and Samoan born women which reflects more Pasifika and Samoan women who are conducting research within their own Samoan communities.

Fairbairn (1961) conducted one of the earliest works that looked at the experiences of Samoan women in New Zealand. She gathered narratives during the 1940s and 50s of different Samoan women such in different workplaces such as teachers, secretaries, a planter, one nurse and a Register of the lands and Titles Court. Fairbairn (1961) looked particularly at their roles and responsibilities in their lives. These women were from different backgrounds born and schooled in Samoan and New Zealand. She found that, "Each story emphasizes the enduring strength of the customary ways (as shown in the family systems and how these are nourished by *Tautua* [service] and acts of love and reciprocity and how women's roles are firmly set in these family systems" (pg. vii). Fairbairn-Dunlop argued that for these women, their identities were defined by their role within their families and the cultural values of *Fa'aSamoa*, to serve one's family and homeland. Samoan women who went New Zealand on government scholarships (during the late 1940s-1950s) were women described as having strong identity and values of *Fa'aSamoa*. Participants shared their challenges and successes in a practical strong manner. According to one participant, "Despite my homesickness, I learnt to rise above the difficulties I encountered by adjusting myself to my new environment. Our headmistress was a great help and I valued the experience I gained from this school. She taught me not to let my new environment overwhelm me" (Fairbairn, 1961, pg. 18). The post-war period saw the arrival of many Samoan women into employment

within the textile manufacturing and food processing industries. “The entry of Pacific Island workers into the New Zealand labour market filled gaps in the unskilled workforce left by a movement upward in the occupational hierarchy of the non-Polynesian workforce” (Fairbairn, 1961, p. 19). This boom period did not last very long, as New Zealand together with the rest of the world entered a recession in the mid-1970s.

Wendy Larner’s (1989) study looked at Samoan women and their participation of the New Zealand work force. Her study showed differences between the women born in Samoa and those born in New Zealand. Larner found out that Pacific women born overseas were over represented in the unskilled area of production and service work and New Zealand women were represented more in clerical work. Island born women were more likely to support families back home in the islands more than the New Zealand born participants. Both sets of women experienced difficulties with childcare and some opted for shift work. Language nests became a way to help out with work commitments. Larner (1989) also found that the two groups had different expectations when it came to their roles and their duties at home. The Samoan New Zealand born participants were more likely to demand help from their husbands to assist with domestic work at home and in looking after the children. New Zealand women were also more than likely to have non-labour occupations being mindful of the challenges that their mothers had working two or more jobs while juggling their households, their church commitments and community obligations. This is useful in that it highlights the differences between the New Zealand and Island born women in what they experienced in areas of the home, church and community. This will also likely be the case for Samoan women in this study who migrated here from Samoa. Larner (1989) also highlights that Samoan women that migrated here to New Zealand did not take on teaching roles in the 1980s unless they were part of language nest. It was only when Samoan women began to train to become qualified teachers later in the 1990s that they started teaching into Pasifika centres and other mainstream centres and schools.

Fairbairn-Dunlop (1996) in a study that looked the roles of Samoan women, asserts that roles of women today can be seen as developed from traditional roles, which tended to be culturally based around family and village life. With European colonial

and church influence those roles become directed outside towards the community in the image of the ‘church’, and the introduction of a wage-earning economy also created changes for women and family life. Women had to balance ‘paid work’ with ‘unpaid work’ responsibilities as a wife and mother, allowing for roles and commitments of employment, childcare and housework. Women’s reproductive role as mother and wife was constantly being compromised and challenged by ‘her’ other roles as an income earner, and ‘her’ roles within the community. Generally, women have been trying to fulfil their responsibilities in all three roles. Samoan language nests added to these roles, assisting women directly in their reproductive role, by serving as a childcare facility and therefore enabling women to commit themselves in paid work and community projects (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1996). Many women were able to come to language nests with their children and later on get paid for this profession. This study covered roles of women involved in *A’oga Amata* in the north island only.

Samu (2011) talks about different experiences for Samoan women compared with the Samoan students in Fairbairn-Dunlop’s (1996) narratives. In *tala mai fafo*, she describes education as challenging where women experienced hardships of loneliness and disconnectedness also experienced by Samu herself. The socio-historical approach questions the meaning of education across time. The women’s voices signal something significant as Samu suggests:

the impact of crucial, high-stakes education experiences on the inner dimensions such as self-identity, self-esteem and confidence, and education as culture crossings into new and different settings and contexts. These appear to be journeys into the margins and fringes of westernised learning settings – and demonstrate that these were, and continue to be (at least initially), disabling social spaces to be within (Samu 2011, p. 20).

These aspects of *tautua* that were customary acts of strength portrayed by women in Fairbairn-Dunlop’s (1996) study and by Samu (2011). These could also be acts that women in this study valued and influenced their involvement within *A’oga Amata*. Samu’s study however, also talks about the disabling Westernised social spaces that she and other women experienced as women on the margins of society. This study also looks at the experiences of Samoan women who were on the margins of society, hence it would interesting to see what kind of social spaces *A’oga Amata* became for

the Samoan community and Samoan women. This study hypothesises that *A'oga Amata* were not disabling spaces as experienced by learners in the study of Samu (2011), but since *A'oga Amata* were created within a Westernised Education system, then colonial incursions would exist. This study seeks to find out what these colonial incursions were and how Samoan women dealt with these barriers.

### ***A'oga Amata* in Aotearoa**

Mara, Foliaki and Coxon (1994) looked at the history of Pasifika ECE nest and centres. They state that 'Pasifika language nests' followed the Kohanga Reo movement in the 1970s for the survival of their own language and culture. Pasifika communities also wanted the survival of their Pasifika languages and cultures. The first Pasifika language nest in the North Island of Aotearoa was believed to have started in 1972-3 where Cook Island and Samoan mothers started up a group named 'Lemali Tamaiti a Samoa' (or St Luke's Language Group). Later in 1982-3 'Teu Punanga o te Reo Kuki Airani' a language nest was led by Cook Island children and families (May, 2003).

Tagoilelagi-Leota (2010) supports the literature that state that the main reason why Samoan language nests and *A'oga Amata* started was to save, immerse and continue the Samoan language and Samoan culture. "The collective aspirations of the Samoan communities and elders to immerse their children, grandchildren, great grandchildren and future children in the Samoan language and culture was and remains primarily the reason why *A'oga Amata* were established in Aotearoa" (2010, pg. 2). Ete (1993) also argues that Pacific Island parents wanted their children to have equal opportunities to learning and access to childcares centres.

The creation of the 'Language nest' was a social movement that was not part of mainstream institutions without any government assistance as there was nothing set up yet for unlicensed language nests at that time. These language nests were set up wherever it was possible for these groups to operate in church halls and homes of Pasifika communities. The first Samoan language nest was set up in 1983 where families met in Wellington homes and then in 1984 at the Herne Bay Resource Centre. Jan Taouma who was the coordinator of the language nest acknowledges the new waters that these language nests were wading in:

I was asked to come and be the coordinator. We thought of a name A'oga Fa'a Samoa. We were really working 'cold'. We had no idea what we were doing other than we wanted to teach children the language. I had a primary teaching background and my children had been to kindergarten. We had a Samoan teacher who had taught in Samoa in a primary school. We set up the rooms and activities but used Samoan language the whole time with the children... (pg. 225 Jan Taouma Interview 2002 in May, 2003).

Once language nests were established then a new issue came into focus relating to children transitioning to Primary school. Catherall (1994) wrote in *the Dominion Sunday Times* about children who struggled to maintain their language once they went to Primary school. The concerns were mentioned about primary schools that were not set up to receive the children from language nests and *A'oga Amata*. Bilingual education was also discussed in the article to address the low levels of achievement experienced by Samoan students in schools (Coxon, Anae, Mara, Wendt – Samu, & Finau, 2002; Samu 2005b). What this article did not discuss was the loss of cultural transmission that language nests also provided that was not maintained at Primary schools.

Dalli (1990) confers that Samoan language nests also influenced and supported other Pasifika language nests to start. This was the case for many language nests around the North Island where in 1987 there were 18 'Pasifika language nests' throughout New Zealand. By the beginning of 1990, this number rose dramatically to 145 language nests (Dalli, 1990, pg. 66).

The most comprehensive study of Samoan women and their experiences of *A'oga Amata* has been Utumapu (1998) who looked at the establishment of *A'oga Amata* in Auckland, interviewing 21 Supervisors and 100 parents/caregivers. She compared the traditional and changing roles from the time of colonisation to contemporary times, focusing on women's involvement within *A'oga Amata*. Utumapu suggests that women's contributions at the language nest were examples of an extension of their Samoan traditional roles. Women were specifically socialised to family and village life. After Samoa accepted Christianity then women were also included in church roles. This was the same for life in New Zealand where anything to do with children and education became women's work. Fathers in Utumapu's study were involved in other roles such as transport, paperwork, attending committee meetings

and acting as advisers to the *A'oga Amata*. The new *A'oga Amata* helped women to transition into the workforce by serving as a child care facility, and as a supportive network for working families.

Utumapu (1998) also explored how relationships between *A'oga Amata* and family systems developed, and how these relationships affected women's roles within the family. Women had better access to childcare in order to go out to paid employment or unpaid employment in their community. However, women did experience stress due to the added extra stress of juggling many roles especially those related to the husband. These unequal power relations between Samoan men and women, and involvement in language nests added an extra role to the multiple roles that Samoan women had to fulfil. These findings raise questions as to the types of challenges that women in this study experienced in Christchurch, and the changing roles they experienced in the Samoan community, *aiga* (family) and society of Christchurch. This study highlights the level of commitment by Samoan women contributing at the language nests and *A'oga Amata* in Auckland that would most also relate to the women in this study also.

Mara, Foliaki & Coxes (1994) state that *A'oga Amata* became an incentive particularly for Pasifika women to take action in ensuring the success of their children in the education system and the survival of their own languages and culture in. The reason why women were able to do this was due to the large amount of Pasifika women that stayed at home during the day with their children that chose to take their children to these language nests that were being set up. These helpers included not just mothers but other women with the families.

Ete (1993) also looked at family support in particular the grandmothers and mothers that supported *A'oga Amata* in Newtown that became established in 1985. This licensed *A'oga Amata* as well as the first licensed *A'oga Amata* in Auckland was both lead and supervised by Minister's wives. Due to the church being the main support of the language nests, it was logical and respectful that the wives of ministers who had the 'mana' of leadership to take on these leadership roles of childcare and lead other women that became teachers (Ibid, 1993). This study argues that Samoan women became language activists within language nests and *A'oga Amata*. Whether

these women realised it or not at the time, their unique set of circumstances, created by the convergence of settling into a new country, new roles within the church, family and within *A'oga Amata* as protectors of the language and culture; *A'oga Amata* turned Samoan women into activists. The church played a major role in the establishment of *A'oga Amata* (Ete, 1993).

### ***A'oga Amata* and the Church**

Burgess' (1988a) study of *A'oga Amata* showed that churches were the backbone of the movement in the north island of New Zealand. This was the case for the setting up of the first licensed '*A'oga Amata* in Wellington in 1985. Burgess describes the vision that parents had for their own children to learn the language and keep their culture alive (Ibid, 1988b). With the support of the Samoan congregational church, the roll grew well in numbers. According to Burgess (1998b), "when a significant number of Samoan families settle in a particular community, they will establish a church, followed some time later in most cases by a Samoan preschool" (pg. 6). During the 1980s two-thirds of language nests in Wellington were associated with churches (Ibid, 1998).

The Church (including churches of different denominations) then is seen to hold a central socialising role within the Samoan community in the ways it supports and promotes aspects of Samoan culture. Churches in Auckland and Wellington have been the primary progenitor of language nests. Language nests that were developed by a group of mothers or parents did not have as much parental support compared to the nests that were supported with direct guidance from a Minister and/or his wife (Burgess, 1998b). It is important to explore how women in this study of Christchurch, made sense of their roles and involvement within the church and how these aligned to their involvement with *A'oga Amata*.

Burgess (1998a) further claims that when adopting a critical stance at church involvement, the church is seen as a powerful institution.

Even though the missionaries have gone the church still continues to be a major institution, changing from representing externally driven colonial processes, to implicitly controlling its own people...for some Samoans the

church is perceived as a powerful and domineering institution that represents the Samoan status quo in its moralist form (Burgess, 1998a, pg. 37).

Churches in New Zealand therefore were also the place for the Pasifika community to gather together like back in the Pasifika islands. Samoan churches not only supported the Christian values but became the protector of core Samoan values, preserving the Samoan language and other aspects of *Fa'aSamoa* that Burgess (1998a) as discussed earlier argues as the status quo. This leads to the question of what Samoan parents including Samoan women wanted to pass onto their children and the main institutions that drove these aspirations. This study will use the theory of cultural transmission to look at how *A'oga Amata* was a place that supported cultural transmission and the role that the church had in supporting this also.

### **Cultural Transmission**

Mchitarjan and Reisenzein's (2014) research highlights the pressures that immigrant parents have in trying to retain their own cultural identity and raising their children within a context that is alien to where they have come from. One way that parents try to pass on their home culture to their children is through cultural transmission. Cultural transmission has been defined for the purposes of this study as the transmission of cultural ideas, values, beliefs, knowledge and practices (Tam, 2015). Acculturation is seen when a group comes into the influence of a more powerful group that is different culturally, linguistically and ethnically and tries to transmit or pass on its culture to the next generation under these circumstances (Mchitarjan & Reisenzein, 2014). This supports the idea that Samoan women wanted to transmit their Samoan values, culture and language to their own children and they were able to do this at *A'oga Amata*. This is also part of the bigger context where churches as were the main drivers and support for establishing *A'oga Amata*.

As discussed earlier, it is clear that if it were not for the church then most *A'oga Amata* would not be established in Christchurch and also in New Zealand. For instance, currently there is only one *A'oga Amata* at the time of conducting this study that is not under the umbrella of a church in Christchurch. The role of the church as a major institution to keep the status quo as argued by Burgess (1998a) supports the theory of cultural transmission where the church is a place where cultural



transmission occurs and where *A'oga Amata* can support the Samoan language and culture as well.

Ete (1993) and Tagoilelagi-Leota (2010) both discussed the important role that church ministers, their wives and community leaders had. Minister's wives became the teachers in most *A'oga Amata* in the North Island. Ete (1993) who was the Director of *A'oga Amata* Training Centre at the time, in her paper presented as part of the NZCER Seminar specifically stressed that “without the church, many Pacific Island people, especially the Samoans, the largest migrant population in New Zealand, would have no access to early childhood education done in their own language and culture” (Podmore, 1993, pg. 90).

### **Summary**

This chapter has discussed the research paradigm for this study that validates Pasifika knowledges and world views. Samoan epistemologies make up the foundation of *talanoa*, *teu le vā* and *Fa'aSamoa* where the narratives of Samoan women in this study are used as essential forms of knowledge in this research. Theories of Womanism and Critical Race theory were also chosen to support the narratives of women in this study that the literature suggests, are marginalised within Western society due to their race, gender and culture. The literature reviewed provide a context for research on Samoan women in New Zealand, an overview of research conducted on *A'oga Amata* and also literature that looks at the significant role of the church in traditional and contemporary Samoa communities.

### **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

#### **Narrative 3: *Teu le vā* - looking after the spaces in-between**

I have been involved in my fair share of research projects and studies as a participant. I have shared my experiences as a tertiary Pasifika student at a university that I attended, I have participated in a study about choices of schooling for Pasifika children as a New Zealand born parent, I have been asked to participate in a study to share my perspectives as a Pasifika educator on how our Education System supported (I would rather have been asked how it did not support) Pasifika students in early childhood and primary education, and how could I ever forget being asked about my views on parenting and how I 'disciplined' my children at home as a Pasifika parent. Some of the ways that I was approached by researchers were respectful of Pasifika values and some were not. Some of the ways that I have been interviewed by researchers have considered respectful ways of *talanoa* where the dialogue was more of a balanced discussion and some researchers have not. Some researchers have made me feel like my voice, my stories and my world views were acknowledged and respected and some researchers have not. While some of the researchers have had the best of intentions, some did fall short when it came to the methods and methodology that they used in research for Pasifika peoples. Therefore, I did not want the participants that were taking part in this research to experience some of the 'interesting' things that I experienced in the past.

My journey to find a methodology for this study like the other steps in this research journey has been challenging. I had to think about how to capture the lived experiences of these Samoan women that I already knew in a respectful and meaningful way for the purposes of this study. I was aware of *Fa'aSamoa* values and how I needed to compose myself with these women that were all older than me and were also born in Samoa. I also had to think about the differences I had as a New Zealand born Samoan women and the fact that my role as an academic teaching at the University of Canterbury may also impact on their participation.

Would these women tell me what they thought I wanted to know or would they be open to sharing their own stories 'warts' and all? The best place for me to start was to consider the *va* (space) and *teu le vā* - look after the spaces and the relationships that I already had with these women. This chapter is a discussion of what I ended up doing and how I conducted certain aspects of this research, with my focus on *teu le vā*. To include 'me' in the data was way out of my own comfort zone and I had to convince myself that I did have something important to share. Academic approaches fail to give attention self-reflexively to the researcher and this is a problem with Western knowledge systems – as if there can be any objectivity at all? Inserting 'me' explicitly within the research can give future Pasifika writers a template for their claiming their own voice and those of others also.

## **Introduction**

This chapter outlines the rationale behind the methods used and the techniques used for gathering information. It will discuss Pasifika epistemologies used to validate and support ways of knowing for Pasifika peoples and in particular the Samoan women participants of this study. Pasifika methodologies of *talanoa* and *teu le vā* are supported by qualitative research approaches and the methods of autoethnography.

## **Pasifika Methodology**

The oral tradition of Pasifika peoples of stories and narratives are regarded as an essential form of knowledge (Pasikale 1996; Mamoe 1999; Tiatia 1998). Vaiioleti (2003) argues that Pasifika people have endured years of disempowering research, with little social or economic improvement in their education or health. A major contributor to this trend has been the insensitive and culturally inappropriate pattern of data collection, knowledge and theorising from researchers that are not aware of Pasifika values and gathering Pasifika stories. Petelo (2003) states that there exists a complex interplay of power and knowledge when researchers are (re)telling the stories of others. Researchers have tried to make sense of these stories and retell them from their own understanding. Smith (1992, pg. 53) powerfully warned that:

They have the power to distort, make visible, to overlook, to exaggerate and to draw conclusions based, not on factual data, but on assumptions, hidden value judgements and often-downright misunderstandings. They have the potential to extend knowledge or perpetrate ignorance.

As a Samoan woman researcher who has gone through similar experiences to the other participants of this study, these issues that Linda Smith talks about can be avoided as I am aware of Samoan values and ways to respect oral traditions. Therefore, this study has used methodology favourably used by many Pasifika researchers called *Talanoa* (Vaiioleti, 2003).

## **Talanoa**

Tala means to ‘inform, talk, tell’ and noa means ‘nothing or void’. Here a culturally appropriate setting is created in which the researcher and the researched talk freely,

openly, with shared ownership over discussions that are unstructured and face to face for Pasifika peoples. Vaioleti (2003) also argues that *Talanoa* is more appropriate for researching Pasifika issues:

It will allow Pasifika peoples to help identify issues; then co-create knowledge and solutions for themselves. Implementation of findings based on Talanoa Research Methodology should be more trustworthy, relevant and widely supported by Pasifika peoples, because they feel that they have had meaningful engagement in the research processes (pg. 34).

This methodology of *talanoa* is supported by critical race theory (CRT) that seeks to understand issues of power. Women are given the chance to share their stories to critique their experiences and offer themselves and the audience a space for transformation. CRT is committed to social justice and working toward ending all forms of oppression. Samoan epistemologies of *Fa'aSamoa* were embedded within the processes of *talanoa* and developed as the research study progressed. These will be discussed later in this chapter under ethical considerations. *Talanoa's* philosophical base is collective, orientated towards defining and acknowledging Pasifika aspirations while developing and implementing Pasifika theoretical and methodological preferences for research. *Talanoa* removes the distance between researcher and participant and provides research participants with a person they can connect with. This is an ideal method of research because relationships are the foundation on which most Pasifika activities are built (Vaioleti, 2003) This foundation relates to the importance of looking after the spaces in-between people, places and things known as *teu le vā*.

### **Teu le vā**

*Teu le vā* is defined as a place or site of action in which social interactions are productive to those who are part of the place (Airini et al., 2010). It also means to keep or look after all the relationships within the space in a harmonious order (Mara, 2013). Relationships are crucial to form collective cohesion for Samoan people (Luafutu-Simpson, 2011). This *vā* (space) between me and the women that were part of this study had to be established and sustained in order for me as researcher to openly *talanoa* with them. *Talanoa* helps to look after relationships by removing the

distance between the researcher and the participant and as Vaioleti (2006) states: “provides research participants with a human face they can relate to” (pg. 25).

### **Qualitative research**

The methodology of *talanoa* is also supported by qualitative research approaches in which a person’s own lived experience is used as a resource (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). Qualitative research allows opportunities for the researcher and the researched to think reflectively, historically, and biographically. Such approaches allow for connections between lived experience and larger, wider social and cultural structures.

The purposes of qualitative research are to explore, discover, construct, and describe phenomena experienced by people in specific contexts. In this study the specific context is *A’oga Amata*: the Samoan Preschools that were established in Christchurch. Strengths of qualitative research recognised by Denzin and Lincoln (2008) are its ability to provide an in-depth understanding of humans and their circumstances. As research on *A’oga Amata* has not been plentiful, then this approach would allow for a deeper understanding of women’s experiences and the context of *A’oga Amata* that was established at the time. Popular qualitative research methods are phenomenology, ethnography, case study, grounded theory, and historical research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). This study has used autoethnography, where I (the researcher) use my own narratives and the narratives of other Samoan women to give the data more depth and richness.

### **Autoethnography**

Autoethnography is a powerful method for working with topics of diversity and identity that supports the Pasifika world views of *talanoa* and *teu le vā*. It connects the “autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social and political” (Ellis, 2004, pg. xix). Autoethnography as a research method will enable me to capture my own lived experiences, creating meaning as an ‘insider’ together with the participants in this study where we have all been deeply affected by the experiences of *A’oga Amata*. Chang (2013) describes three main characteristics of autoethnography. Firstly, the researcher’s personal experiences is used as primary data, secondly that the method

expands the understanding of social phenomena and thirdly, that processes can vary and result in different writing products. My thesis will endeavour to capture all three of these characteristics; however the emphasis will be used to support Pasifika epistemologies first and foremost. There are different approaches to autoethnography that are recognised by different researchers, however I have chosen the approach that broadens the database including others where both my experiences and other women's narratives can complement one another, but the focus is still anchored in my personal experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Foster, McAllister, and O'Brien (2005) adopted this approach where "self as the starting point for the study and for inclusion in field text analysis alongside the experiences of the participants" (Foster, McAllister & O'Brien 2005, pg. 5). From a *talanoa* perspective, there is no one voice that should be placed above others, but a shared ownership of the discussions.

Chang (2013) also talks about researchers having access to personal data that may be off limits to other researchers. Autoethnography is to "not only tell personal stories...but to expand the understanding of social realities through the lens of the researcher's personal experiences" (Chang, 2013 pg. 109). This gives me the opportunity to expand on the social realities of myself and others, providing opportunities for meaning and understanding to be made and more importantly a critique to be made of challenging and difficult experiences. This supports what Berry and Clair (2011) state where "Personal stories become vehicles for social critiques through which readers gain understandings of autoethnographer's social realities and of the social forces contextualizing their experiences" (pg. 17). This is a powerful place where personal stories can be places of healing as women can share, contextualise and make sense of experiences that they have not been able to unpack or talk about deeply before.

Culture is made possible through lived experience and autoethnography is inherently a cultural practice, where stories can be instrumental in constructing identities and informing our interpersonal relationships (Bochner, 2012). Cultural standards are defined as a "principle, standard, or quality considered worthwhile or desirable" (Chang, 2008, pg. 96).

In autoethnographic study, the analysis of personal values and preference is useful but it is a challenge when values are not always articulated in people's daily lives.

Therefore, data on personal values come from the process of self-analysis. In this sense, the advantage of using self-reflective data allows for the collection of crossed boundaries between data collection and data analysis (Chang, 2008, p. 97). An example of this are the self-narratives that begin each chapter in this thesis.

### **Positioning and Potential Risks**

From a personal perspective, my position as an ‘insider’ researcher may have both advantages and disadvantages. The benefit of belonging to the Pasifika/Samoan community in Christchurch means that as relationships have formed over time, trust has in some cases already been formed unlike *Palagi* researchers that often intimidate our peoples (Luafutu-Simpson, 2006). However, the small size of the local Samoan population in Christchurch, coupled with the fact that I have worked in two out of the five licensed *A’oga Amata*, may also pose risks associated with neutrality issues.

As researcher I also have intimate knowledge of *A’oga Amata* centres, its staff, families and children; therefore it is necessary to consider the implications that come with my “insider status”. With regard to Kaupapa Māori research, Linda Smith (1999) discusses the issues of insider/outsider research that remind me to tread carefully. Smith, (1999) says:

insider researchers have to be skilled in defining very clearly their research goals and their lines of relating to participants to make sure that these are specific to the research project, and do not go into the participants’ relationships within their own family or community networks (pg, 46).

I need to be mindful of what my research goals are before I start to engage with participants to avoid going into personal information about family or community. Issues of “othering” in relation to participants is also realised by Petelo (1996) who talked about how age, gender and ethnicity had placed some limitations on the data she collected. I too will need to be aware of such “positionalities” that cannot be changed. I am younger than the participants who participated in this study, which raises the issue of maintaining respect towards these women as elders of *Fa’aSamoa*. Participants will also likely be immigrants to New Zealand which will highlight the differences that I have with the women being born in New Zealand. I need to take “insider” precautions as suggested by Luafutu-Simpson (2006) who states “I

discovered through my fieldwork that there was much I was unaware of, and I could no longer take my inside knowledge for granted” (Luafutu-Simpson, pg. 7).

Due to the potential risks discussed above, it was important for me to establish a positive rapport and trust with the participants and Pasifika communities, ensuring confidentiality and safety for all. Pasifika values such as respect, service and reciprocity have been Samoan values that have been grounded in my own upbringing. Since the participants were older than me, engaging with them in this manner did seem ‘natural’ and comfortable and I was mindful to *teu le vā* – look after the space of respect and nurture between us (Mara, 2013). Within the interviews many participants shared personal stories about themselves as did I. This is an important part of building authentic relationships where *fetuai* (sharing) and *fa’aaloalo* (respect) occur that can result if the *talanoa* is fruitful (Luafutu-Simpson, 2006).

### **Ethical Considerations**

*The Poutu Model* (discussed in Chapter Two) outlines key values of *Fa’aSamoa* *fa’aaloalo* (service), *alofa* (love) and *tautua* (service) that were used during the process of this study. If I was unsure of cultural appropriateness or how to *teu le vā*, I sought advice from Pasifika elders, Pasifika researchers or the participants themselves. Pasikale (1996) states that the relationship between the researcher and those being researched should be negotiated to reflect the interests of both parties and the unequal power relations should be acknowledged where they exist. Before I could approach any participants for this study I needed to first apply for approval from the University of Canterbury, College of Education Human Ethics Committee using their application form and supplying the required forms. Once I had approval from this Committee I was then able to commence on obtaining participants who were interested in taking part in this study.

I shared my research at two University of Canterbury Postgraduate Symposia in 2011 and 2013 and one Pasifika Talanoa Access presentation in 2011. This included Universities from around New Zealand where I was able to take on board constructive feedback from other Pasifika academics, students and people from the community. I was fortunate to receive overwhelming support for my research.



## **Criteria for selecting participants**

Tupuola (1994) stresses the importance of using cultural values of *Fa'aSamoa* within the research that involves Samoan peoples working alongside the researcher. I therefore felt it was important to first have a *talanoa* with Samoan and Pasifika elders, researchers and a couple of Samoan women (that I felt may be interested in taking part), as to how I should go about approaching and selecting women to be involved in this study.

After obtaining advice and direction from the Pasifika community noted in the previous section, I decided to focus on three centres out of the five licensed *A'oga Amata* in Christchurch, to ensure confidentiality of the participants as well as to protect the early childhood centres themselves from being specifically identified. It was also vital to assure participants of their anonymity and given that I work in the Pasifika community, confidentiality remains an issue within this small people group in Christchurch. In order to protect the identity of participants, pseudonym names of Samoan colours were given to each of the participants.

I decided to interview six Samoan women who were directly involved in setting up three out of the five licensed Samoan *A'oga Amata* during the 1980s to 1990s in Christchurch. The main criterion for the selection of the sample was that these women were of Samoan descent. The second criterion was that they had a management, supervisory or teaching position in an *A'oga Amata* centre for at least 2 years, during the time that the centre was first established as a licensed centre. This timeframe for their involvement in *A'oga Amata* could be before or after the centre became fully licensed by the government, so that I could capture the experiences of this licensing period that I personally witnessed and wanted to focus on.

## **Data collection methods**

I created an autobiographical timeline with memorable events and experiences in the order that they happened relating to my time within *A'oga Amata*. Chang (2008) suggests that this is a good way to better manage the research process into manageable steps. Since I was concentrating on my experiences of *A'oga Amata* this

timeline had a thematic focus with the aim of acquiring a foundation for self-narratives of other Samoan women and their experiences of *A'oga Amata*.

### **Field Journal**

I used a journal to record private and personal thoughts and feelings relating to the research process. They were kept separate from other data that recorded more objective data in the research process. In reality it is difficult to keep “subjective” feelings and “objective” feelings completely separate from one another as noted by Chang (2008) but ethnographers can invariably apply their “subjective” judgement and interpretation and, while recording their emotions they may document situations subjectively. Even though this was difficult, journaling provided purposeful and healthy interruptions during the research process allowing me to move into and out of the self-reflective state. It also helped me to justify some of my thoughts and rationale to why I chose to document and use certain data and also why I chose to leave experiences and certain aspects out.

### **Selecting Participants**

I attended a Christchurch Early Childhood Pasifika Network meeting in July 2011 where I was given the opportunity to talk about my study. I was contacted by two women the following day who were interested to take part. I was then contacted by other women by phone or approached at community meetings or events. I was grateful that the six women selected had worked in three of the *A'oga Amata* in Christchurch, meeting the criteria for my selection.

After the six women were chosen, I contacted each participant about a time to meet so that I could talk more about the study and they could receive a ‘Participant Information Sheet’ (APPENDIX 1) and sign the ‘Participant Consent Form’ (APPENDIX 2). This meeting provided a good opportunity for women to ask questions and for us to discuss a suitable time and place for the interviews to take place.

On the day before each interview took place, I had each participant fill out a ‘Background Information Form’ (APPENDIX 3). This enabled me to answer any further questions women had about the study before the interview began. Getting to

know background information also gave me the opportunity to know the participants more and ask questions about information they provided. I went through the form with each participant to make sure that each part was filled in as much as possible ensuring that they felt comfortable answering each question. I felt that this was a good way for each participant to ease into the interview or *talanoa* (conversation).

### Profile of Participants

I used the ‘Background Information Form’ to put together Table 1 that summarised the data I had asked for. This table is a summary of the information that all seven participants (including myself) provided.

<b>Pseudonym name</b>	<i>Violeti</i>	<i>Mumu</i>	<i>Samasama</i>	<i>Moana</i>	<i>Piniki</i>	<i>Meamata</i>	Jo (researcher)
<b>1. Born</b>	Samoa	Samoa	Samoa	Samoa	Samoa	Samoa	N.Z
<b>2. Parents birth place</b>	Samoa	Samoa	Samoa	Samoa	Samoa	Samoa	N.Z
<b>3. Church Denomination</b>	Presbyterian SDA	SDA	SDA	SDA	Presbyterian	EFK/SDA	Presbyterian
<b>4. Church attendance</b>	High - weekly	High - weekly	High - weekly	High - weekly	High - weekly	High – weekly	High - Weekly
<b>5. Religion</b>	Christian	Christian	Christian	Christian	Christian	Christian	Christian
<b>6. Age group</b>	60+	60+	40+	40+	50+	40+	40+
<b>7. Place Educated</b>	Samoa & N.Z	Samoa & N.Z	Samoa & N.Z	Samoa & N.Z	Samoa & N.Z	Samoa	N.Z
<b>8. Started at A’oga Amata</b>	80s	90s	90s	90s	90s	80s	90s
<b>9. Length at A’oga Amata</b>	Over 20 years	Still there Over 20 years	Still there Over 20 years	Still there Over 20 years	Still there Over 20 years	Still there Over 20 years	Over 12 years
<b>10. Roles at A’oga Amata</b>	Teacher/ support	Head Teacher/ support	Teacher/ support	Supervisor and teacher	Teacher/ support Supervisor Playgroup	Teacher/ support	Teacher/ support
<b>11. Children</b>	6	3	5	2	6	3	3
<b>12. Marital</b>	Married	Married	Married	Married	Married	Married	Married
<b>13. Occupation of husband</b>	Foreman/Retired now	Retired	Many labour jobs House hubby now	Taxi driver	Taxi driver	Foreman	Manager

Table 1: Profile of Participants

## **Talanoa/ Interviews**

Most interviews took place at the women's workplaces with one being conducted at the participant's home. Semi-structured interviews varied between each participant. The shortest interview was 40 minutes and the longest was 240 minutes long. Permission and signed consent was sought from each participant to use a tape-recorder to record the interview. The interviews were based around the guiding questions (APPENDIX 4), in a more conversational manner of *talanoa* in order to place the participants at ease. I personally knew all of the participants either through family connections, work, church, or community events so this enabled a relaxed setting for both me and the participants. All interviews took place during the months of July 2012 and January 2013.

## **Analysis and Interpretation**

Chang (2008) states that the autoethnographic research process is not a linear one where one activity leads to the next one until you reach the final destination. Instead research overlaps, sometimes returning you to previous steps. I found that this is what happened in the research process. Many times I had to go back and check my steps and to see if my theoretical framework, methodology and methods all 'married' up. One activity informed and modified another, but at times I found myself returning to previous steps until I felt comfortable to move forward again.

Sometimes the collection process also intertwined with data analysis and interpretation. Here Chang (2008) discusses that the data collection, analysis and interpretation activities may inform each other cyclically or concurrently. For example, as the researcher I examined the validity of each criterion and modified them accordingly. There were a few times when I was 'stuck' in my own uncertainty and needed to share areas of analysis with my supervisor which was very helpful. Here I experienced the importance of data collection and analysis that go hand in hand (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, pg.128).

The specific autoethnographic strategies that I used from Chang (2008) for interpreting and analysing the data were looking for cultural themes to explain cultural tenets. Here I found that labelling and classifying data helped me to wade

my way through all the ‘bits’ that I had gathered. This also meant that I had to refine some of the data by expanding in some areas and trimming in other areas. Once I was satisfied with the main themes that emerged from the data, I then looked at the connections these had to my literature review and my main question for this study. This assisted in writing up the analysis chapters, where I had to make sense of the main themes of the data, look at what the literature said about the themes and then see how it could help in answering my main research question.

## **Writing**

I chose to write both evocatively and analytically. I selected journal entries (that became my own narratives) as the starting point for each of the chapters. This enabled me to keep the analysis and interpretation chapter formal by writing my own journal entries separately analytically. Due to this research being an autoethnography, I wanted to also highlight my own struggles within the research process as well as any ‘light bulb moments’ I had. Autoethnography ended up being a place of self-discovery where I chose to take the audience with me on my own journey as a new researcher making sense of my own social realities and those of others. The theory of Womanism allows the writer the freedom of telling and writing their own history: “Women are able to express their own self-determination in reclaiming their indigenous matrilineal and multifocal roles, roles that empower them with respect and authority in indigenous governance” (Guerrero, 2003, pg. 26). Both evocative and analytical writing enables me as the researcher to document and celebrate the narratives of our own histories.

## **Timeframe**

This study has been lengthy process. Research began in 2010, was suspended in 2011 after the Christchurch earthquakes and resumed in 2012. As a part time student with a full time job, I slowly worked towards my goal of completion to the end of 2014. My study was put on hold again, after my mother passed away in September 2014 and then an uncle in November 2014, so extra time was needed to complete this study. As Luafutu-Simpson (2006) so eloquently stated as she was completing her Master’s degree:

As a 1st generation NZ-born Samoan, I am familiar with the challenges that diametrically opposed cultural values and expectations present, as I live with this tenuous bipolar reality on a daily basis. I find the relationship of living as a Samoan with the cultural expectations and obligations this entails, in a Western environment with contrasting expectations, leaves one feeling schizophrenic at the best of times (pg, 50).

Many times I too was feeling schizophrenic during the process of completing this study. At times this study was pushed backstage after family *fa'alavelave* (funerals, weddings and birthdays) or church events that took precedence. I found that this 'stopping and starting' did not help the consistency and continuity of my writing. My primary supervisors (one supervisor needed to reduce their work load and another supervisor left UC) supported regardless of the challenges I faced and helped me to write more consistently and in manageable stages. I believe it was also my own lack of confidence as a researcher and writer that prevented me at times from moving forward. As each part of the process continued to unfold, my own confidence to complete this study slowly grew.

## **Summary**

This chapter has outlined the rationale behind the methods and techniques used for gathering information. Pasifika epistemologies have been used to validate and support knowledges that are important to Pasifika peoples and in particular the Samoan women participants of this study. It was important that I could *teu le vā* and look after the relationships that I had with the women when we had a *talanoa*. These Pasifika methodologies were supported by qualitative research approaches and the methods of autoethnography. The following chapter will introduce the six participants that gifted their time to share their own self-narratives for this study.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: PARTICIPANT INTRODUCTIONS**

### **Narrative 4: Who are you?**

I have many fond memories of when Grandma Tali'ilagi from Saleimoa in Samoa came to live with us. She was a lively woman who wanted to know what was going on in the house and what people were doing all the time. This included knowing who was knocking on the door or rang the doorbell. My family would have to tell her whoever it was and what they wanted. Those 70 year old beady eyes and sharp ears didn't miss much at all. When Samoan people came to visit for the first time (and grandma found out they were Samoan), she would yell out for them to come and sit with her in the lounge and ask in Samoan "Who are you?" This was usually followed by "Who are your parents?" "What is your family name?" and so forth. My sister Jac and I called this questioning 'Grandma's interrogation' - a long and sometimes intimidating process. I use to apologise in advance to people for grandma's interrogation until mum told us that grandma only did this because we did not introduce people properly to her. Mum said Grandma wanted to make the connection with people to acknowledge their family and who they were. Once I discovered this, I tried to find out about people's background so that I could introduce them properly to my grandma. Once she knew people's *nu'u* (village) and *aiga* (family), I noticed that her 'interrogation' subsided or stopped and she would then share her own memories about the person's family or village and then ask if people wanted to play a card game *suiipi* – Grandma's favourite game that usually lasted another hour or so!

Knowing who you are and knowing the person you are talking to, is an important aspect of *Fa'aSamoa* where introductions acknowledge everyone present before further *talanoa* or conversations can take place. When *matai* (high chiefs and chiefs) meet to have the *ava* ceremony (Samoan traditional welcome) or to discuss important matters, the *Fa'aSamoa* custom of acknowledging the name of the chief, the village and family is very important. Hence, it was important for me to remember what my grandma had taught me when I was young for this study. This meant knowing more about the participants myself but also for you the reader to know more about the participants before we go further into their narratives and stories. It is my pleasure to introduce the Samoan women participants properly to you in the following pages.

## Introduction

Researchers in the past have tried to make sense of stories and retell them from their own understanding. Petelo (2003) states that there exists a complex interplay of power and knowledge when researchers are (re)telling the stories of others. I have been mindful about this interplay of power especially in how I was going to analyse the data and share the stories that have been gifted for the purposes of this study. I decided that it was important for me as researcher to introduce all the participants first to show my *fa'aaloalo* and *alofa* (respect and love) to them, by valuing who they are and to acknowledge their participation. This is an important aspect of *Fa'aSamoa* where introductions acknowledge everyone first present before further *talanoa*. I have also added in minimal background information that was provided before interviews took place. The words are from the participants themselves, without any analysis of my own for the purposes of this chapter only. This also supports the perspective of *Womanism* that honours women, their narratives and experiences at any particular time and place (Phillips, 2006).

### 1. *Meamata*

*Meamata* was born in Samoa and then came to New Zealand in 1988 to stay with her aunty living in Christchurch.

I came from Samoa in '88... I was carrying from Samoa you know my first child, I got here in November '88 and I had baby on May '89 and that's when I have to, you know I was a single mother looking after a child and that's my very first job... I knew that's really important because thinking back home, we are so important to our parents you know.

So, I came to Christchurch to seek a better future for my child and have lived in Christchurch for twenty-three years now. My initial entry into *A'oga Amata* was (to be) the parents for my preschool children. It turned into a career opportunity for me. To be honest I was just wanting to be a mother, I just want to take them and be with them there you know to see how it goes and what they learn from *A'oga Amata* and then it turns out I was the parent helper and then it turned up that I really like it.



I lived in Hoon Hay...that was easy for me because was they got transportation for the children. They pick up the children at the time you know because you know I do not have car at the time and I was not married you know. And I thought that I got a free chance for me so I can take my daughter with me.

For the beginning I just go there as a parent for my daughter to support and when I started to get interested to get involved I really got a passion and I knew that I've got something that I can help deliver for the children.

My first memories of *A'oga Amata* reminded me of when I was a child growing up. And my parents role in my life, listening to old songs and stories and, and yes you know there are family friends. And I think about the main purpose of *A'oga Amata* is to encourage and develop our Pacific children to learn to speak the Samoan language and understand the culture and heritage in the hope they will be able to educate their children.

You know (who) support me is family, friends and staff. They supported a lot for me because I was a single mother at that time living with my aunty and you know I don't know where to start from because that's the very first child. You know without parents and without sisters or brothers to help me but it was support from family, friends and also staff at the school. It's so helpful for me if I think back because I remember the last time when my aunty separated you know and then my aunty goes to her friend, taking me and it was not enough room for us, for me and my daughter to have a room. And then we end up going to the place that you know, the refuge for family. That's when they find me a Housing New Zealand house...one bedroom for me and my oldest one. That's you know so sad when I think back to the first time that I just have children and how important that I really want to bring up my children but at that time I don't know how to drive, you know and it's quite hard walk with your children to do shopping. When I had my own house I have to walk with her every day. We live at the corner of Stanmore and Richmond, we have to walk from there find the only closest supermarket is New World.

*Meamata* has been married for over 20 years, has three children and is still working at the same Samoan *A'oga Amata* she started volunteering at. She still has plans to study towards a teaching degree in early childhood education. She still attends the same church and is heavily involved in church leadership roles as well as looking after her youngest son.

## **2. Mumu**

*Mumu* was born in Samoa and came to live in Christchurch with her husband and oldest son. She became involved in the language nest that was started at her church hall. She remembers a lot of the mothers that came with their children to support and fathers that also helped to pick children up in their cars.

In 1994 we started the language nest in the hall. Ave (take son)...encourage e fai le course...fiafia (happy)...nearly 5 years e involved piki tamaiti (pick up the children)...e le mafai galu I le tamaiti (we never forget the children)...always encourage 'V' to role model tous...always nearly in the morning to ta'apega (sort out) put everything into to hall and then put everything back every day...like PIC eh (laughs...this is my own church).

Planning was hard...that's my first time just drop the kids...but why they doing the preschool? I have no idea of how to do the planning...profile books...how can I that without the course this is where I learn from? I can't do this without learning from the course.

'V' & 'F' they always encourage us to not give up...as parents I learn now...back then I had no idea...that is my memory of when I think back of when we started. I thought that I just drop my kids there (*A'oga Amata*)...but I am happy that people encourage me to to take my kids...I enjoyed helping the other mothers... I never work...nofo loa le fale (stay at home)...here tele alu le a'oga (here a lot go to A'oga), na fai le galuega (to do their work)...keep their language...

We had a busy time when we work together to fundraise to build up the building and the resources ...we didn't have much resources but we worked

hard to buy some and we made some too with our own hands. I liked the learning and I am happy that I went to get my teaching diploma. It was a challenge for me to go back to school and extend my knowledge but I am so happy I do it.

I hope that all Pasifika families stand together to value our customs and language and show the people in New Zealand that we are not stupid...we can show our identity. My hope is we - all Samoans to stand together to encourage our language.

### **3. *Piniki***

*Piniki* was born in Samoa in the mid-60s and came to New Zealand in 1976. She lived in Wellington for one year with her aunty and then came to Christchurch to live in 1977. *Piniki* became involved with *A'oga Amata* with her own children at her church languages nest. She has six children but only two of them went to *A'oga Amata* due to work commitments she had and where they lived at the time. Taking most of her children to other preschools was easier due to locality and also hours that allowed her to drop her children off and pick them up. *Piniki* did take one of her youngest sons to *A'oga Amata* and supported where she could. She became more heavily involved in 2003 when she also started training to become a qualified early childhood teacher during this time.

When my son 'J' was born and then you know how the leaders was telling the parents to bring the kids and yeah I was at home with 'J' and thought it's a good idea to take him just to be with other kids around him because there was quite a big gap between my little one, you know my 15 year old and 'J'so I want to take him to mix with others, mingle with other children.

I was a parent helper for almost two years, yes just helping out...I was helping for two years in 2003 and 2004 and then I went over to take that you know the courses at Te Tari Puna. I graduate with my diploma and at that time was teaching full time at *A'oga*. My daughter was already teaching there...she was earlier than me...

After I graduate from the Te Tari Puna I was looking forward to work you know teaching children, especially when you've got the diploma and you know what you're doing. You're quite good you know and especially helping our own children with the language as well yes...

For me personally it's for our children, our Samoan children as with this preschool here it's like, it's multicultural. And I think with the language because this is why I really want to work in the Samoan language to develop that, I've seen my own children struggling with the language as well and, and yeah I'm glad that I come here... just to help our children maintain the language as well.

When *Piniki* was interviewed she was working at another licensed *A'oga Amata* since the one that she was teaching at with her youngest son was closed down one year ago. Since writing this information *Piniki* has moved on from this teaching position to start up a language nest in the suburb she lives in. It is currently going through the process of licensing and finding a property for the new building. These are exciting times for *Piniki* as she had experienced going through the challenges of one *A'oga Amata* closing down and now she is leading a new one being established. As she stated earlier before she took on this new venture her dream was:

To see all these *A'oga Amata* to stay and move, you know, I know that Samoan teachers and management should have that knowledge of moving all these preschool forward and you know we are here...so that's my dream and I always dream of maintaining all the preschools.

#### **4. *Samasama***

*Samasama* was born in Samoa and came to New Zealand in the 1980s with her husband. She has 5 children and all of them attended the church language nest that was set up in the church hall. She became involved with her oldest daughter 'M' in 1992. *Samasama* became one of the main parent helpers at the church language nest and constantly talked about the good memories she had in setting up the language nest and then when the language nest became licensed.

‘A’ was really keen to look forward to alu i le A’oga( go to A’oga)...parents helpers e fa’avai le a’oga (fix up the A’oga) a good memory...never give up for me as a parent to encourage me as a parent...e alu e malamalama(go to learn) e extend the knowledge and experience. ‘V’ e role model for us mothers...she the one that encourage me to go do the course always encourage the mothers that are there...tamati...and shes the one with ‘F’ that’s why we are here now...and ‘T’ & ‘T’ pick up the kids.

A’oga is to help o le aganu’u (village/community) help transition o tamaiti (children) i le (to) Primary...o le challenge o le leo (language) become qualified teaher ...for me as a mum for a role model to be malosi (strong), I help and support my kids assignment...involved with my kids at school...put me to contribute at school and other things. I build ai le values – fa’aloalo (listen), le spiritual for all the children.

*Samasama* ended up studying at Te Tari Puna and completed her Diploma together with other Pasifika women. She valued this learning and went to teach at another *A’oga Amata* for a change after she graduated in 2008. *Samasama* is still currently teaching and had taken on board acting Supervisor roles while her Supervisor has been away. She is also still an active part of the Pasifika ECE network that meets regularly at the Ministry of Education and her future hopes are:

...to carry on the *A’oga Amata* especially the Pasifika one becos we want to value our cultures to keep our identity – who we are and where we come from...give our A’oga for our young ones to build...their young ones.

## **5. Moana**

*Moana* was born in Samoa in the late 1960s and migrated from Samoa to Christchurch in 1987. As a young wife and mother, she quickly established herself within a Samoan church where her husband’s family were members. *Moana* talks about becoming involved by taking her baby son the church language nest that was set up in the church hall. She relied on transportation from church men who volunteered to pick families up in the van as well as the bus. As a women that had not been in Christchurch long, these new experiences were hard but as she describes

“well worth it”.

Me, myself I had a vision I had a vision like you know I go out there every time I went with ‘V’ my little boy... there was two older men from our church, they volunteer themselves to pick us up and I remember I was one of the mothers that didn’t know how to drive. If I don’t get the lift I pack my son early in the morning and we go on the bus, we catch two buses from Aranui when we used to live in Aranui, to town and town to here.

Yes...same thing after school every day. So that was the hardship for me at that time. But it was all worth it you know. Having that vision in my mind, yeah what enabled me to do that, you know keep doing that without any regrets.

My husband didn’t agree with me at the time. He said he’ll stay home you know, you don’t have to go and catch two buses. He said, he was worried about me, there’s too much for me to get up in the morning and get my son ready and bus from there to town and bus from town to, so that’s only when these men are not available because they are not here. But if they are sick because they are old men if they are sick then I cannot rely on them.

People from church especially mothers encouraged *Moana* to take her son to the language nest as many of the church children and mothers attended. When *Moana* took her son to the language nest she was not sure what to expect, but she did feel strongly about the importance of the Samoan language and for her son to socialise with other children.

When I had my boy I bring him, you know I brought him to preschool language nest here and I see my son you know it was really good, it benefit my son in the language because that was all about it. The importance of that language, I wanted my son to maintain that. That was my goal too for my son to still know how to speak Samoan and understand Samoan. That’s the only thing I bring my son to preschool at last to be able to socialise with other children, because I didn’t have a job at the time.

Since *Moana* became involved as a volunteer in the church language nest she

became a teacher and was involved in the licensing of the language nest that became established in 2001. *Moana* went through teacher training at the Christchurch College of Education and gained a Diploma of teaching in early childhood. She later upgraded to complete a teaching degree in early childhood education. *Moana* still teachers in the same *A'oga Amata* today having being a head teacher and supervisor of the preschool. At the moment she has stepped down from leadership roles due to health problems she has had in the last 2 years.

The main purpose of the *A'oga Amata* is to be able to you know like a foundation for a child you know, to build that foundation within the child you know because if we don't do a good one, you know that child won't be able to go on and keep on learning good things. So that is the main purpose and the language, because in here I speak to the children, I still deliver the language to the children.

## **6. *Violeti***

*Violeti* was born in the beautiful island of Savaii Samoa. She grew up with six sisters and six brothers as the second eldest child. *Violeti* came to New Zealand to live with her aunty in Christchurch to start a new life, working and sending money home to her mother and father. She also helped out a lot at her aunt's house that was full of family and friends from the islands that needed somewhere to stay while settling into the city. *Violeti* met her husband at her church and he was given permission to date her. With her first daughter born in 1970 and four sons that followed, both *Violeti's* family established themselves in Bromley Christchurch following their dream of buying a house and settling down in New Zealand. *Violeti's* skills of teaching in Samoa (was one of the first trained teachers from her village) was helpful when she set up the first language nest at her church. *Violeti* also became a support teacher in a few Primary schools for children that were learning English as a second language. The following is *Violeti's* story of how she came to be involved in *A'oga Amata*.

I was a teacher in Samoa...I came here and we had a group called Autamafai... a group at the (name of church) and I took all of them (kids) to

*A'oga Amata* that's the Samoan language because children started losing their Samoan first language and we were all pleased to involve with it ...in 1986 I think when A and G were here but before that there was a group called A when F and S were here they started with B and D but they were not using the English language and so when they were teaching them (children) we were all thinking that they need the Samoan language and so that's how we started...we sort of involving with the children and I loved taking my boys there – they were all involved there... we had our *A'oga Amata* there (church hall) every Saturday afternoon started about 3 o'clock...before the church choir started and then the children were having a rest and then the older people would have their *A'oga pese* and this was the starting of *A'oga Amata*. They never use to have it...the first church in Ch-Ch ...to be teaching this was St Pauls...and then it was EFKS they came second because F from Wellington was the one who sort of encouraging the other churches to do it... and EFKS to do their own...to encourage children learn to speak Samoan .

The church was thinking of having a (Licensed) *A'oga Amata*...that's the time of A and G there and G was a very keen mother (wife of the minister) to do this one...and they choose me to be the first one to started this and it was very good cos we had lots of children and we were thinking of where we supposed to... held it and I suggest it that we can start it here at the and then we can move it somewhere suitable... a place that is suitable to the criteria of how...the children would have a playground...have a grass outside but they came and we still sticking at the hall.

I remember we all go and help with R, one of person taking people from the community and help in the schools. Not just to help with their language but to help with their 'amio' you know their way of in school. I remember T come and say "Common...you were a teacher in Samoa come along...but I have little ones I can't teach when I have little ones but they said I could always bring them...I remember when junior was just a little one and 'A' wanted me to go to speak at 'T' School while dad was with 'J' in the car.



That was the beginning of helping...I went to help out students at ...school with ...because their English was not very good.

*Violeti* retired from teaching at *A'oga Amata* in 2004 but has relieved up until 2006 at her church centre. *Violeti* has strong beliefs about what *A'oga Amata* should be doing and how teachers should be teaching. Her values she has comes from her own faith in God and what we need to do as *A'oga Amata* to serve the Lord.

We are here for a reason...there are two forces...good and evil and I am still giving it to you through my vision of the church and the preschool...but one day everyone will realise what I am talking about. I love the Lord Jesus and everything that He has done for us. My vision is for anybody in this world...

### **Summary**

These introductions provide a profile of the women that took part in this study. All women were born in Samoa and came to New Zealand to start a new life with their families. They first became involved in the Samoan language nests that were set up by their churches with their own children. They were then all were part of the licensing process when the Samoan language nests they volunteered at became fully licensed *A'oga Amata*. While all women participants received their education in Samoa, five of the women ended up studying towards teaching qualifications as mature students, gaining teacher qualifications in early childhood education. What is obvious from these narratives is that all women wanted to pass on important treasures to their children including the Samoan language, culture, values and beliefs. They did all they could to transmit and pass these onto their families. This relates to next chapter that discusses findings of *A'oga Amata* as a place of cultural transmission.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS**

### ***A'OGA AMATA AS A PLACE OF CULTURAL TRANSMISSION***

#### **Narrative 5: Clumsy and out of place**

I felt sick to my stomach. Mum gave me another hard stare and yelled at me again in front of everyone in the church hall. I had stood on the fringed edges of the *ie toga* (woven fine mat) again and the ripping sound was followed by little pieces of frayed pandanus falling to the ground. I felt like I the one being ripped to shreds hearing the laughs and whispers that followed my mum's remarks. Why did she have to yell at me when doing *feau* (jobs) in front of everyone? I heard another mother yell at my friend for folding the mats slowly but this did not make me feel any better. I know that it's common for Samoan parents to openly discipline children this way and show their authority especially when they have an audience. I wanted to run out of the room as soon as I placed the mat down to be folded, but that would have made things worse. I would have to face the shame and jokes that came from being a runaway when I saw everyone again...and I also did not want to embarrass my parents any more than I already had. I just had to suck it up and continue displaying the fine mats with my cousin Sene from Samoa. Why couldn't I move gracefully and effortlessly like her? She was immaculately dressed, had the beautiful *puleasi* (traditional top with matching *lavalava*), *sei* (flower in her hair) to match that stunning smile that I wanted to rip off her face. She could also fluently converse in Samoan which put my 'broken Samoan' to shame. What could Sene 'not do'? I couldn't understand when she kept telling me that I was the lucky one and she would rather live here in New Zealand than back in Samoa.

I was thirteen years old when my aunty Lena was married. As I think back to this moment when our family were exchanging valuable items and money with the groom's family, the same questions came flooding back to seek answers to my awkwardness. Why did my parents stop speaking to me in Samoan at home when I was little? Why did my parents listen to my teachers at school that told them that they had to help me learn English so they only spoke to me in this foreign language? Why didn't they show me how to do *feau* (Samoan work) properly so that I would know what to do when things came up? I am so envious of my cousins who can participate in *Fa'aSamoa* with ease...I feel so clumsy and out of place.

Some of the research that I have read for this study state that immigrant parents make choices depending on what their plans are for the future of their children. If parents think that their children will benefit in the future from aspects of the dominant culture then they will do what they can to ensure their children can

succeed. I guess my parents made the choice for me to learn the English language well so that I could be successful within the *Palagi* world. Again my parents words of “Use your head and not your hands” ... “Work hard...do good at school so that you can get a good job” are ringing in my head as I think about the sacrifices that they made to make sure that I was able to do these things.

Mum and dad did not pass on the Samoan language to me like they did to my older brothers. I am sure it was because my teacher at the time was the only one that complained that I couldn't speak English so my parents agreed to help me out by speaking only English at home. My parents did though make sure that *Fa'aSamoa* values of *alofa*, *tautua* and *fa'aaloalo* were drummed into us kids. Being obedient and respectful was important in my household and my parents did offer rewards of praise especially when I received stunning reports or prizes from school for my achievements. It must have made them feel proud to have their children succeeding within this new place that they made home.

I sometimes wonder if my parents had regrets not maintaining the language at home with me...I have read many stories about Pasifika parents who migrated to New Zealand that regret not passing the language on to their children but are happy that they passed on the values of *Fa'aSamoa*. There has also been a lot of research, writing, creative dance, music, art and poetry on cultural identity from New Zealand born Pasifika peoples like me that share their perspectives living in 'hybrid diaspora' where they are in-between cultures and spaces. I can certainly relate to being in hybrid places when I travel back and forth from New Zealand to Samoa and I feel like I don't completely belong in either space.

As NZ born Samoans we are constantly negotiating our cultural and ethnic identity in all the spaces and contexts we are in. Like the reaction of my eldest daughter when I suggested she draw a coconut tree for her family tree at school. She said “Mum do you see coconut trees outside our home? I will draw a tree like the one in our garden”. My parent's generation made decisions on what they wanted to culturally transmit to me and my brothers and sisters, based on their experiences and their plans for my family's future. My husband and I are also trying to do the same for our own children prioritising what we think is important to pass on and also what we feel we can realistically do.

Even though I feel like I am in constant negotiation with my own sense of identity in hybrid places, many of the core *Fa'aSamoa* and Christian values that my parents taught me as a child are the values that my husband and I want to pass onto our own children. These are also the values that women in this study talked about as well. It seems that while I have had different upbringings and experiences to the women in this study, the *Fa'aSamoa* values and core beliefs of what we want to pass onto our own children are the same.

## **Introduction**

The central question for this study is: Why did Samoan women establish A'oga Amata within Christchurch and how did their experiences impact on their roles as Samoan women living in New Zealand? This chapter will help to answer the first part of this question by looking at one of the main themes that has emerged from the data on cultural transmission. This will provide some understanding on why Samoan women established *A'oga Amata* in Christchurch. Samoan women became involved in *A'oga Amata* from a desire to keep *Fa'aSamoa* alive for their own children. They were driven by social motivators of *fear, loss, prejudice and resistance*. These social motivators will be examined to illustrate what Samoan women experienced as immigrants settling and living in New Zealand. Samoan women resisted the dominant Pākehā culture where colonial incursions undermined the very essence of what was being established at *A'oga Amata*.

## **Cultural Transmission**

A lot of research on immigration highlights the pressures that immigrant parents have in trying to retain their own cultural identity and raising their children within a context that is alien to where they have come from. Parenting becomes a complicated interplay between enculturation (socialization within one's own ethnic culture) and acculturation (socialization to the dominant culture) (Mchitarjan & Reisenzein, 2014). One way that parents try to pass on their home culture to their children is through cultural transmission. Cultural transmission has been defined for the purposes of this study as the transmission of cultural ideas, values, beliefs, knowledge and practices (Tam, 2015). Acculturation is seen when a group comes into the influence of a more powerful group that is different culturally, linguistically and ethnically and tries to transmit or pass on its culture to the next generation under these circumstances (Mchitarjan & Reisenzein, 2014).

In this study, Samoan women expressed that that they wanted to pass on their own identity to their children through the cultural transmission of *Fa'aSamoa* (Samoan language and culture). This was what they claimed as the main reason they chose to

establish *A'oga Amata* where they became involved as parent helpers and teachers as shared by *Meamata* and *Moana*.

The main purpose of *A'oga Amata* is to encourage and develop our Pacific children to learn to speak the Samoan language and understand the culture and heritage in the hope they will be able to educate their own children...that's why I bring my kids (*Meamata*)

I brought him (son) to the language nest here and I see...you know it was really good, it benefit my son in the language because that was what it's all about it (*Moana*).

*Mumu* also talked about the importance of the language and culture as being an important part of the Samoan identity that she wanted to keep alive:

We wanted to value our language and culture to keep our identity – who we are and where we come from...give our A'oga for our young ones to build their young ones...keep our culture and language alive (*Mumu*).

*Piniki* shared the importance of the *Fa'aSamoa* and how proud she was when she heard her grandchildren singing and doing *lotu* (prayer) in Samoan. She wanted her grandchildren to grow up being proud of their Samoan heritage.

I think *A'oga Amata* is about the language and this is what we want as parents...you know to pass on the *Fa'aSamoa* to our kids. That's why my grandchildren even now my H (grandchild) she's still sing and do the *lotu* (prayer) in Samoan you know very clear loud and clear and that's the importance of our language and I want them to know and be proud of their, their Samoan side (*Piniki*).

These responses support the research that has been conducted in the North Island where Pacific language nests; in particular Samoan language nests were established to save, immerse and continue the Samoan language and Samoan culture (Burgess, 1998a; Taouma, 1992). There was a desire for parents to receive their children's first educational experiences in the Samoan language (Burgess, 1997; 1988b). This is not surprising as *A'oga Amata* has been explicit in this intention since they

started. However, going back to the research question of ‘why’ Samoan women established *A’oga Amata* requires us to look deeper into where these desires came from. This takes us to the motivating social factors of ‘fear and loss’ that Samoan women experienced.

### **Social motivation factors of ‘fear and loss’**

Mchitarjan and Reizenzein (2014) argue that the most important activating cultural-transmission motive is the perception that one’s culture is endangered. In this study we see that women were motivated to teach their children the Samoan language and culture as they were in fear of their children losing their language, culture and what was important to them. *Violeti* could see that her own children were at risk of losing their language. She shared these fears:

We could see that many of our children started losing their Samoan first language, just like my older two...and so we were all pleased to be involved with the first A’oga...in 1986 there was a group but they were using the English language and so when they were teaching them (children) we were all thinking that they need the Samoan language to remember who they are and so that’s how we started...sort of involving with the children and I loved taking my boys there – they were all involved there (*Violeti*).

*Violeti* expresses how Samoan language is part of her children’s identity and an important part of who they are. She talks about a play group at church that were using English but parents could see that their children needed the Samoan language. Kirova (2006) argues that when your own language is the ‘house of being’ then language, culture and place are intimately connected because ‘knowing’ happens relationally and language shapes who we are and how we view the world. Samoan parents could see and feel that the English language their children were receiving, was not connected to who they were and how they viewed the world as Samoan people. As *Violeti* stated, parents could ‘see’ that their children needed their own language within their own ‘house of being’. *Piniki* also expressed her concerns seeing her own children struggling with the Samoan language and how she was glad that she became involved in A’oga to help her children maintain the language.

For me personally it's for our children...our Samoan children as with this preschool here. I think with the language...this is why I really want to work in the Samoan language to develop that and to teach the children what is important to us. I've seen my own children struggling with the language as well you know at home... and yeah I'm glad that I come here... to help our children maintain the language (*Piniki*).

The sense of loss stated here is not simply about losing the Samoan language. *Piniki* and *Violeti* did not want their children to lose what was important to them and for their children to always 'remember who they are'. As stated by Hunkin-Tuiletufuga (2001) language plays a central role in the socialisation and formation of social identity. This is further supported by Spolsky (1988) who argues that anyone who is learning English and gives up their own language runs the serious risk of "losing its culture, identity, and traditional values" (pg, 16). This mirrors what Samoan women feared would happen to their own children. They already could see that their children were struggling to use the Samoan language at home when their children were within spaces that used the English language frequently. As pointed out earlier, their 'house of being' was being disrupted where sense of language, culture and place was not intimately connected (Kirova, 2006). Samoan women in this study were not only fearful that the Samoan language will be lost, but that the values of *Fa'aSamoa* would be lost also.

The concern about the type of education that children were receiving at *A'oga Amata* compared to education at a mainstream *Palagi* centre is a common one amongst Samoan parents. Luafutu-Simpson (2006) in her research showed that some New Zealand born Samoan parents chose to take their own children to mainstream centres due to their own concerns about quality and expectations of school readiness. While participants in this study did not specifically mention parents that chose to take their children to mainstream centres, they did discuss parents who wanted to bring their children to *A'oga Amata* to avoid language and cultural loss for their own children.

I know some of my own family who bring their children here because they do not know the language themselves but want their children to learn. It is good to see them coming with their children because I know that it is not easy for

some of their parents to come to a place that can maybe be uncomfortable for them. Some of the teachers here are also learning to speak better Samoan and better English so we are all helping one another. I am lucky my kids know the language and they are now starting their families and are bringing my moko here... (*Mumu*).

I wish that there was somewhere for the first generation to go to back in the 1970s because many of us parents were busy working at the time...there are many Samoan born here in New Zealand that do not know how to speak Samoan and that is sad but it is good for them to bring their children here to A'oga...some of them are taking their kids to other *Palagi* preschool and then their kids will not learn anything too... (*Samasama*).

*Meamata* talks about the time when some of her friends from church told her to take her son to a Kindergarten as they were worried about her son not knowing English at Primary school.

You know some of my friends told me to pull my son out and take him to kindergarten. And I said what for? They said because at school the teachers complain that your child doesn't speak English. I said no he's fine. He'll be automatically learning the English, he's fine. He has to maintain his first language, that's my idea when I started. But if I wasn't trained or wasn't involved and no knowledge I just take him to Kindy you know same like all the other ones thinking that they had to learn the English. So many of us start to worry about our children's education once they start Primary school especially with the language... (*Meamata*).

It is interesting how *Meamata* mentioned that if she wasn't trained then she would not have known how important it was for her son to maintain the language at an early age. It is unfortunate that many parents are not supported or given vital knowledge regarding second language acquisition or the benefits of their children being bilingual or multilingual. Some parents ended up taking their children to mainstream centres where the language and culture was not maintained (Luafutu-Simpson, 2006). Research in this area suggests that children who are fluent in their



own home language or have a foundational language will readily pick up another language such as English in schools (Kirova, 2006). *Meamata* goes onto say:

I feel sad that our people are worried about their kids when they take them to the Primary school. Many parents keep asking me when I'm teaching what they should do and I tell them to keep speaking to their kids at home in the Samoan language and keep bringing their kids here to *A'oga Amata* so that they don't lose the language. The English will come once they go to the Primary school. That is what happened to my own children (*Meamata*)

It is enlightening that *Meamata* was able to use the knowledge that she gained while studying to become a qualified teacher to give advice to parents at *A'oga Amata* that were not sure about their children's education. *Violeti* also felt that language was important as it was part of Samoan identity and would help children know who they were as Samoans.

Two women in this study migrated from Samoa in the late 1960s and two women migrated to New Zealand in the 1970s. This was during the time when there were significant inflows of migrants from Samoa in the 1960s and 1970s, resulting in dramatic increases in the number of Samoan peoples in New Zealand in low skilled jobs (Ongeley, 1991). *Violeti* had worked in kitchen hand, factory and cleaning jobs before she became part of *A'oga Amata*. *Mumu* also had been involved in factory line jobs in Christchurch before she became involved in *A'oga Amata*. These experiences relate to the fear that immigrant parents have of their children having low skilled jobs (Mchitarjan & Reisenzein, 2014). Many Pasifika parents migrated to New Zealand to seek a better life for them and their families. A lot of parents worked hard in many low skilled jobs to provide for their families and set their children up for a better future (Spoonley & Macpherson, 2004). Like many minority immigrants to New Zealand, Samoan parents experienced discrimination that impacted on what they wanted and did not want for their children and families.

### **Social motivation from discrimination**

The social motivation for cultural transmission from immigrant parents can also come from discrimination. Samoan parents migrated here to New Zealand to start a

better life and they wanted their own children to succeed (Spoonley & Macpherson, 2004). Even though Samoan women did not openly state that they experienced racism or discrimination (this question was not specifically asked), some of their responses implied that they did. For instance, *Samasama* talked about the goal for *A'oga Amata* being one that involved to “fight for our own people”

I hope that all Pasifika families stand together to value our customs and language and show the people in New Zealand that we are not stupid [big sigh]...we can show our identity. My hope is we - all Samoans to stand together to encourage our language we are proud of...as Samoans to fight for our own people (*Samasama*).

*Samasama* is sharing her hope that all Pasifika people will stand united in their own identity here in New Zealand. These words of “fight” and “we are not stupid” echoes a counteracting statement towards stereotypes and discrimination of Pacific people in New Zealand that have historically been represented as unintelligent, unmotivated, unhealthy and criminal (Ongeley, 1991). When I asked *Samasama* what she meant about her statement she replied:

“You know Jo...some people think that we are stupid because we are not from here or can't speak proper English or whatever...people treat us like we don't know anything especially the *Palagi* (white) people...”(*Samasama*).

*Samasama's* response here may relate to what Mchitarjan and Reizenzein (2014) argue that may occur after immigrants experience denied rights or cultural transmission is disrupted by discrimination. A New Zealand survey of 200 migrants that included Samoan peoples revealed that 32 felt they had been discriminated against (Department of Internal Affairs, 1996). Migrants also experienced discrimination related to their lack of experience, the financial cost of training and upgrading, and the lack of fluency in the English language. Other barriers included misinformation, misunderstanding, and denial of opportunities, an inability to assess the job market and an inability to gain the training or experience necessary (Department of Internal Affairs, 1996). Larner (1989) and Ongeley (1991) also revealed in their research that Pasifika people were part of disempowering experiences within the workforce as Pasifika migrants in New Zealand. All Samoan

women in this study were involved in low skilled jobs before they were involved in *A'oga Amata* (Ongeley, 1991 and Lerner, 1989). *Mumu* shared about the time when she was a cleaner:

When I was working as a cleaner...it was about 1990 when J (son) was still at school...you know my boss and some of the manager...they don't think we understand English and they talk and I can hear them say not nice things about us Pacific people...like they are happy we are good hard workers and don't know anything else because our pay is down and they don't need to put our pay up...I don't say anything because I know they think we don't know anything and I don't want them to kick us out for complaining about them and cause trouble...we just put our head down and work hard, get our pay and that is it...(*Mumu*).

When I questioned *Mumu* about these experiences of discrimination she said that she “survived being treated this way” and felt that this way of being treated was something that makes “Pacific people stronger here”. She then moved to another topic and so I didn't press further, however her reaction made me think about experiences that she may not have been comfortable to talk about or did not want to revisit. It also made me think about negative experiences that these women had that they did not want their own children to experience. *Moana* also shared about her experiences working to make sure that her family could pay living costs unlike in Samoa where living was free.

Over here if you're not working your family is not eating, your family is not have a place to stay, you know...that's the thing you know it's a big difference from Samoa and here because Samoa is you stay free, you eat free... not going to pay the house, it's your own house. That's why when we don't like our jobs or if we are not treated good by our boss or other people we still think about our families first and paying for this and that...this keeps us going...when I find a better job and a better boss that is when I move to another job but I can't do this until I know for sure I have another job waiting for me and this was the same for a lot of my family that came over... we feel low sometimes back then when I remember back...(*Moana*).

These experiences that *Moana* and *Mumu* shared supported the findings from Larner (1989) and Ongeley (1991) where Pasifika migrants were part of disempowering experiences within the workforce in New Zealand. However, despite Pasifika people being over-represented in low skilled jobs, Samoan women in this study took on new roles that involved them helping out and teaching at Samoan language nests and *A'oga Amata*. These jobs were not part of the low skilled jobs within the New Zealand workforce, which gave them more recognition and status within the workforce. The impact of *A'oga Amata* on Samoan women roles will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 3.

### **Social motivation factors of 'resistance'**

I have chosen to use meanings of 'resistance' derived from Hall and Fenelon (2009) who have written extensively on indigenous global struggles using models of revitalisation and resistance. Resistance relates to thoughts, beliefs or activity of indigenous peoples within dominant states that have a history of colonisation, hegemonic expansion, conquest, and contemporary pattern of domination. Hall and Fenelon (2009) further argue that in tandem with colonialism, world markets are controlled as "the development of the underdeveloped" where nations are subsumed in the process of 'development' (conquest, coercive assimilation and nation building) and those that survive these processes are further oppressed and marginalised through forms of internal colonialism (Hall & Fenelon, 2009, pg. 38).

This 'resistance' of conquest and assimilation has a long history of imperialism and colonisation in this country that has stripped away the rights and humanity of the indigenous Māori peoples of Aotearoa (Smith. L, 1999). Since the signing of the treaty of Waitangi, the historical breaches of the treaty seen the cultural denial, of what was precious to Māori including the land, language and culture; leaving severe scars in the Education system today. Early childhood education centres still operate within a monocultural monolingual paradigm, where English is still the privileged language and the culture is organised around Western beliefs and practices. While the indigenous language te reo Māori became an official language in 1987, only 1 % of the non- Māori population speak te reo Māori (Ritchie, 2008). The Kōhanga Reo movement in New Zealand involved Kōhanga being set up around the country to

revitalise Te reo Māori and resist the dominant English language (Mara, Foliaki & Coxon, 1994). This movement gave life to Pasifika activism where Pasifika peoples have established language nests to provide for their own children (Chambers, 2015). Some Pacific Language nests in the north island were motivated by Kōhanga Reo that was set up in the country (Mara, Foliaki & Coxon, 1994). *A'oga Amata* has also been seen being established in areas of Australia and the United States where research is also scarce but much needed. It is important to note that many Samoan churches around the world are more likely to have an *A'oga Amata* that is licensed or run by groups of parents as was the case for the women in this study. Resistance to the English language and dominant culture are all examples of language activism present in establishments that do not promote the dominant culture and language (Mchitarjan & Reisenzein, 2014).

Samoan women in the same way resisted the use of the English language used in schools and spaces that their older children were involved in. *Moana* states that:

The importance of the language, I wanted my son to maintain that. That was my goal too for my son to still know how to speak Samoan and understand Samoa...too much English here everywhere in New Zealand...English in the schools, English in our jobs. Once my son knows the language I wanted him to never lose it so A'oga was a good place for him...for him to come to (*Moana*).

*Moana* talks about “too much English in the schools, English in our jobs” showing a sense of resistance to the English language of the dominant culture. *Moana* also clearly states that once her son learns the language she never wants him to lose the Samoan language. *Moana* is a trained teacher hence may have learned the importance of first and second language acquisition during her training.

Research shows that a child's first language needs to be supported throughout the early years in order for the language to be sustained (Hunkin-Tuiletufuga, 2001). To maintain languages and stop the decline will require languages to be spoken in the home, within the community and in schools and early childhood centres. Languages need to be either full immersion or dual medium bilingual education, with emphasis on Pasifika language “with teaching in English kept to a minimum” (May,

Hill & Tiakiwai, 2004, pg. 58). When a child's first language is not maintained during the early years then the risks of bilingual subtraction can occur (May, Hill & Tiakiwai, 2004). Bilingual research has consistently highlighted that the *best* means by which a student can acquire, and achieve academic success in a second or additional language is via the acquisition of literacy in the child's first language (May, Hill & Tiakiwai, 2004). However, when children are subjected to monolingualism with English as the main language of instruction in New Zealand schools this becomes very problematic. The target language of *Gagana Samoa* (Samoan language) must be fostered so that language proficiency is acquired at *A'oga Amata* and homes, especially when children at *A'oga Amata* enter schools that are English-only programmes. Unless *Gagana Samoa* is specifically taught at *A'oga Amata* and continued into Primary schooling, then subtractive learning is likely to occur (May, Hill & Tiakiwai, 2004).

It was unfortunate that *Moana* who was still teaching at the same *A'oga Amata* when interviewed said that the high use of English language was still an issue. English was still the dominant language which is a problem for children who do not know how to speak Samoan, and as argued above will not be able to support children's acquisition with full immersion nor bilingual programmes. This also goes against the main purpose of *A'oga Amata* and why it was set up in the first place as *Samasama* explains:

The main purpose of the *A'oga Amata* is to be a foundation for a child you know. If we don't do a good one, you know that child won't be able to go on and keep on learning good things. So that is the main purpose...the language, because in here I speak to the children, I still deliver the language to the children. Lots of things we do is in Samoan when I do something, when me – there's only three Samoan here – but sometimes in here in this country we are and we have to respect other people that they don't understand our language. We always seem to chuck in the English because we don't want some staff to feel out of place because we're talking Samoan all the time and she doesn't understand. So that's, that's why it's a bit tricky at the moment but if there's all Samoan teachers that know the language the children will learn well... you know Samoan language (*Samasama*).

*Samasama* is aware of the importance of having instruction in the Samoan language at *A'oga Amata* in order for children to learn and sustain the use of the language at home and at *A'oga Amata*. This was the case with the Kōhanga Reo movement where programmes were full immersion using the Maori language and this helped children and adults to learn, revitalise and sustain Te reo Māori. For *A'oga Amata* to be more effective, the Samoan language needs to be fully immersed like full immersion programmes that have been documented in the north island (Burgess, 1997, 1998a; Taouma, 1992). Samoan women in this study clearly shared their concerns when their centre programmes did not support the Samoan language due to staffing issues and state licensing requirements.

A problematic issue for *A'oga Amata* during the 1990s involved all early childhood teachers to comply with state licensing requirements of qualified teachers. Some of the Samoan women in this study were part of the two year Pacific Island Early Childhood Diploma Courses taught at the Canterbury College of Education to fast track their qualification process (Burgess, 1990, 2012). While many teachers were studying for their diplomas, other qualified teachers were hired to meet staff qualification regulations that could not speak or understand the Samoan language. *Mumu* discussed the problems that occurred when this happened in the centre she was at:

There was a time we were so happy because it was only the Samoan language spoken and then they (management) started to employ people um...*Palagi* and Samoan and other cultures that don't understand Samoan...and this was the big problem became every time we speak Samoan they were not comfortable. So we don't want to make people feel bad so we, we eventually you know just go along and speak English all the time to make them feel better. But in my heart it's not right, it's not okay, yeah... we need to highlight the importance of the language...if you are employee here you've got to learn the language. That's what I wanted. I'm hoping that this centre will go back to just Samoan language (*Mumu*).

*Mumu* has raised here the heart breaking outcome that occurs when compliance to Western capabilities can lead to undermining minority values and aspirations. The centre that *Mumu* was at was initially established to promote the Samoan language

and culture, but ended up employing teachers that were not fluent in the Samoan language due to requirements for qualified staff. *Mumu* stressed her concerns about qualified staff that did not know how to speak Samoan. These were obvious feelings of resistance towards the dominant use of English within *A'oga Amata* from teachers that only wanted the Samoan language to be used within the programme. This highlights the issues of a capitulation to Western capabilities that are not in the best interests of minority cultures. Macpherson (2004) states that between 1991 and 2001, the significant increase in Pasifika children attending early childhood centres from birth to four years increased from 26% to 33%. However, most of these children were receiving education in the English language. Researchers argue that the acceleration of Pasifika language loss will continue unless community leaders and government support programs that will reverse the trend (Macpherson, 2004). *A'oga Amata* need teachers that are fluent in teaching the Samoan language so that that the language can be maintained as discussed by *Moana*:

I want the centre to be able to be just Samoan teachers. In saying that, it will make it easier for us to maintain the language....I was thinking back to my dear supervisor that left, you know she's trying hard and she left here so happy because me and T was helping her a lot with the Samoan language. But see they can do the job but that's the thing that they need to educate more on...this centre is for the Samoan language even if you know how to do other things but it's not good if you want to maintain the language. I have to say this to our teachers at a staff meeting even though I know some teachers are not comfortable (*Moana*).

*Moana's* comments points to heart-breaking issue where the Pasifika early childhood sector became part of the whole early childhood sector in New Zealand that was striving to upgrade qualifications, set minimum qualification requirements, and provide training incentives in order to provide a higher quality ECE service (Coxon, et al 2002). The pressures to meet national requirements allowed for colonial incursions to impact on Samoan spaces of *A'oga Amata*. This can happen as stated earlier, where nations are subsumed in the process of 'development' and indigenous and minority cultures are further oppressed and marginalised through forms of internal colonialism (Hall & Fenelon, 2009). *Moana* resisted teachers not fluent in



the Samoan language and she respectfully shared her views with other teachers. Having teachers not fluent in the language does not support language revitalisation (Hunkin-Tuiletufuga, 2001). Therefore, the role that Samoan women had to protect the Samoan language within their own centres and the programmes they created was an important role that women played as language activists.

This issue also raises questions regarding ‘safe decolonised spaces’ where spaces that have been set up to support minority cultures, undermine the very work that is at the centre of the community. *A’oga Amata* had anxieties towards the dominant culture’s regulations and laws that governed their centres and suffered for it. Professor Fairbairn-Dunlop (2015) discusses the culturally safe spaces that she has personally experienced “where I can be me.” These culturally safe spaces were where Pasifika identity, belonging and togetherness have extreme importance in identity security, reaffirming the value and validity of Pasifika knowledges and ways (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2015). Furthermore, Fairbairn-Dunlop argued that these spaces can help set the foundation for Pasifika knowledges and values from the periphery to the centre. Using the English language within a centre that is committed to using *Fa’aSamoa* as a living language and employing teachers that could not speak the Samoan language, is not a culturally safe space that reaffirms Samoan identity and belonging or the values as a house of being.

*Meamata* was the only teacher in this study that was not a trained teacher at her centre; however she states that even though she was not trained, she still had the qualifications to teach the Samoan language and culture.

I do not have diploma of teaching, but I am qualified with the Samoan language, how to teach the language, I can share my knowledge and understanding to others in other *A’oga Amata*...why do we need to go to train to learn how to teach our children how to speak our own language? I teach all my children and they are all very good with their language. That’s why people here they pressure me a lot for the studies but I know the right time... (*Meamata*).

Even though *Meamata* has ambitions to become a qualified teacher, she also shows a sense of resistance to qualified teachers not being competent to teach the Samoan

language. This supports the definition used on ‘resistance’ that relates to the beliefs, values and actions of Samoan women that resisted the dominant Pākehā culture in the New Zealand. Women that were first involved in Samoan language nests did not need to be qualified teachers and then when their centres became licensed this requirement changed. *Meamata* believes that being fluent in the Samoan language makes you qualified to teach the language. She also has confidence to say that she could share the language and knowledge she has with other *A’oga Amata*. Valuing the Samoan language and knowledges in this way is an act of activism where the dominant system and status of Western knowledges is de-centralised. Vaioleti (2003) argues that Pacific cultures, knowledge and values should be accepted in their own right. Especially when what is valued within the profession of early childhood education is essentially a Western view of childhood (Fleer & Richardson, 2003).

## **Conclusion**

Samoan women became involved in *A’oga Amata* as they wanted to pass on their own language and culture to their own children, becoming another tool and place for cultural transmission. The social motivators that women had of fear, loss, repetition of discrimination and resistance deepen our understanding of why these women established these places of learning. Women were fearful that their children would lose their Samoan language, culture and identity and would also experience negative experiences that they went through as they migrated and settled in New Zealand. Unfortunately, colonial incursions existed in *A’oga Amata* and became more noticeable when *A’oga Amata* became licensed centres and had to adhere to legal requirements. This undermined what *A’oga Amata* was created to be as a culturally safe space. Samoan women nevertheless were protectors of a place of belonging for their Samoan children, families and community which will be discussed in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER SIX: FINDINGS**

### ***A'OGA AMATA AS A PLACE OF BELONGING***

#### **Narrative 6: Finding a place to belong**

##### **My first visit**

Nana and grandpa started picking Vevesi up daily to go to the Samoan language nest at church. Our new weekly routine started where I would prepare Vevesi for her day at the language nest, have breakfast with grandpa while he waited for his painting crew from church and then spend the day cleaning the house and relaxing. I quickly adjusted to missing my princess when she was away...and with being pregnant again I did appreciate the quiet moments where I could rest. Grandpa started finishing late so I had to pick up nana and Vevesi at the nest.

I can remember feeling quite nervous about going in as this was not my own church and I did not know anyone except nana. As I entered the hall some of the mothers recognised me and came to greet me with a huge smile and hug. I was quite overwhelmed with the warm welcome and found Vevesi happily playing with children inside. There was play dough on one table, lego on another, books and paints, art stuff set up – I was quite impressed with the resources. I loved play dough and started playing at the table with some of the children who asked me who I was (in Samoan) and when I started talking to them they must of picked up my 'broken Samoan' and started to speak to me in English. I watched as the mothers there interacted with the children. There was a lot of laughter with the children and adults that were there. Some other parents were there relaxing in the kitchen or on the chairs near the kitchen and the buzz of conversation and laughter felt nice to be a part of. Nana seemed like one of the leading teachers there as I could see her talking with parents and also about what certain children were doing during the week. Nana was a trained teacher so it was wonderful to see her skills in action. I was soon to find out that there was another lady who was qualified who had just finished her teaching degree at UC. There were also two other mothers who had Pacific teaching diplomas and again this surprised me as I assumed that qualified teachers would be out in paid teaching jobs, not as volunteers. My thoughts were totally off track.

The Samoan language nest had both a Samoan and *Palagi* feel. The content was Samoan like the language, having lotu (prayer), songs, alphabet, but the resources were *Palagi*. It was a nice mix and I could see why Vevesi enjoyed coming here with her nana. She did not want to stick with me at all and this was a relief. When it was pack up time we all helped to pack up the resources and put them away in a cupboard in the corner of the hall and also put them in another room. It was quite

tiring and I remember thinking to myself that this was quite a lot of work setting up and packing away but because the hall was used for other church events, the resources had to be packed away every day.

### **My second visit**

I picked up nana and Vevesi again and it was great saying hi to the parents I met earlier on. I remember playing on the play dough table while the kids were having something to eat. Some of the kids were playing at the table too and we started making party food...cake, pizza, sausages, lollies, we had a lot of blue party food for our party (play dough was blue with glitter). I can remember enjoying this play and one mother commented on the children enjoying it. It wasn't long before we had to pack up again. The helpers all had to vacuum and sweep the floors as well as clean up in the kitchen. It was great to see my daughter having fun here...at first I was not so sure about coming but I felt a lot more comfortable now. Some of the mothers did not want me to lift anything as I was pregnant so I did little jobs. As we left some of the mothers asked if I was coming back tomorrow.

I started to pick up the two Vevesi's more times during the week as Grandpa had to be picked up by the church van to do community work earlier. The mothers were always so friendly. Nana was one of the elders of the church and by the looks of things she was well respected and looked up to by the parents here. I suppose that this was good for us as nana would make sure that Vevesi and I were well looked after. I remember the wonderful singing that the children and mothers did. At times I felt envious at not knowing the pese (songs) but was happy that Vevesi had learnt some of the songs. There were also times when the mothers would be sharing stories and jokes in Samoan and then when they talked to me would use English. Even though I was grateful they did this as my Samoan was not so good in speaking, I did also feel resentment when I was not included in the conversations using the language. Did my daughter also feel this way with the other kids here that could speak the language well? Did she feel that she could belong here?

My second daughter Jarise was born on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2001. We stayed at home while nana and Vevesi went to the language nest. These were exciting times for the language nest as they were working towards becoming a licensed centre. Nana Vevesi was busy helping the team by preparing the new building that was built on the church premises. When I first saw the building I was amazed that the church had a brand new building that was for the children and families. I thought about my own church that started the first language nest in Christchurch but was still operating in the church hall. It was time for the centre to go through the licensing process and nana talked about how hard everyone was working towards this. The church pastor and wife were very supportive during this time as they were "educated people" and she said they knew how to get things done. When the

centre officially came licensed in 2001, there was an official opening of the new centre – a huge celebration.

### **New building**

Picking up the two Vevesi's from the new pre-school building was exciting. There were swings and a sandpit that my daughter Vevesi immediately was drawn to. The Supervisor was very busy but she usually made the time to say a quick hello and goodbye. From looking around I could see that there was a Supervisor, two staff for the under 2s and three staff for the Over 2s plus a floating teacher who could cover breaks and be there to support all roles. While Vevesi was on the Over 2s I started to take Jarise to the Under 2s to play. She enjoyed playing with the babies and infants there. I loved the staff there that were welcoming and usually singing and laughing with the children.

### **Teaching on the Under 2s**

The supervisor approached me to see if I wanted a relieving position to work on the Under 2s. I felt excited and scared about this as I was not sure how this would go with my children and also entering the workforce with young children felt scary. I talked about it with my husband and we thought that we would give it a go. I started relieving for two days a week for 7 hours a day. I loved it! It was easy to fit into a team that I already knew. Being able to come with my girls took a bit of organisation but we got used to it. I felt a new sense of freedom...

The routine was easy to learn. I was still breastfeeding Jarise so when she needed a feed I would try and feed her when it was appropriate to. At times I had to distract her or the children to feed as I did not want to interrupt the programme and tried to follow other children's cues and needs too. This was a hassle at times and I couldn't help but feel for the staff when I was feeding and they had to do other things without me. It was a lot easier when Jarise was able to take a bottle. I relieved at the centre for about 3 months and the Supervisor asked me if I wanted a permanent part time position. I was elated as I was enjoying teaching. Jarise was nearly one years old and Vevesi was 3 ½ and both of them were settled into the centre. *A'oga Amata* had become our second home.

### **Leading mat time**

"You want to lead mat time this morning Jo?" asked one of the staff. Immediately I felt uneasy – "oh my gosh - lead the mat time all in Samoan?" I had been here for over 4 months so you would think that I could do this right? "Sure" I said reluctantly and then I did it. It wasn't the best mat time...I did simple songs that I knew and used simple phrases in-between songs. Even though it wasn't the best

the two staff thanked me with much appreciation. That day I made a mental note that I was going to practice my mat times and be better prepared...the children deserved better than this.

### ***“Oute le malamalama” (I don’t understand)***

One morning we had a parent helper help out in the kitchen as our usual help was away. She started talking to me in Samoan and when I replied to her in English she looked at me, chuckled and asked “Are you Samoan? Do you know how to speak?” I told her that I was Samoan and had mixed ancestry (Samoan, Fijian and Chinese) and that I understood most of the language but my speaking was not flash. She smiled and continued to do her work in the kitchen. I could not help but feel uncomfortable. I have always struggled with this question and this issue of not being fluent in my language. I also felt that I used my mixed ancestry to cover up for my inadequacies in speaking my language.

### **The ‘ie’ to cover the coffin**

We had the same helper in the kitchen today and she spoke to me in Samoan saying that the food was ready and she was going to cover the food with the white lace. She then said in Samoan that it was like covering a coffin...a body... using the white lace and material that we use in funerals. She laughed in a sarcastic way asking me why I was laughing when I didn’t know what she was saying. I was annoyed as I did understand her joke and so when I took off the food covering to give the food to the children, I said “OK...let’s take the ie (material) off the dead body”. Everyone laughed out loud but I still felt annoyed for the rest of kai time.

I now turn to my analysis of my earlier experiences.

My self-narratives reveal my inner struggle with my own sense of identity and belonging. I felt that my sense of place and belonging was different to the other Samoan women involved in this study, highlighting the differences we had in regards to being born and brought up in different places. I could not help but question what it meant to be ‘belong’. Most of the time I felt I was treated at *A’oga Amata* like a ‘Samoan *Palagi*’ (Samoan white person) however ironically, *A’oga Amata* became the place where I felt the ‘most’ Samoan compared to any other school or place of learning. The rest of this chapter reveals the how *A’oga Amata* became a place of belonging for Samoan women in this study who also experienced some challenges but managed to create a place for their own children, families and the Samoan community.

## Introduction

This chapter will provide more understanding on the main question for this study that asks why Samoan women established *A'oga Amata* within Christchurch. The findings for this study reveal that *A'oga Amata* was also a place of belonging. The theory of 'place' and 'belonging' will be discussed to support how Samoan women created a place where their children, family and community could belong. *A'oga Amata* became an extension of village, home and church setting, affirming the Pasifika concept of 'va' (space) of *A'oga Amata* as a site of action that was productive to the Samoan community. Samoan women became involved in *A'oga Amata* as they aspired to '*teu le vā*' (look after the space) by protecting and guarding all that was precious and valued by Samoan peoples. This came with certain challenges that impacted on variable degrees of women's own place of belonging.

## 'Place'

Many definitions look at sense of 'place' as shaped by location or 'place in the world' which is further shaped by social, cultural and psychological contexts (McCreanor, Jensen, Witten, Kearns & Barnes, 2006). Even though this study focused on a particular context of 'place' being Christchurch, this study looked further into the degree to which Samoan families felt they had a 'place' of being included, accepted and valued, asserting Samoan values and identity within *A'oga Amata*. Being accepted and valued as Pasifika and as Samoan in New Zealand impacts on one's own sense of identity (Albrow, 1997).

In this study six out of the seven Samoan women were first involved as parent helpers at church language nests. *Meamata* and *Mumu* both talk about being included and accepted as parent helpers that lead to feeling included in a new created 'place'.

For the beginning I just go there as a parent for my daughter to support and then I started to get interested to get involved I really... I knew that I've got a passion and I knew that I've got something that I can help deliver the teaching for the children...this new place for us was really good for us because we were all learning together and trying out new things (*Meamata*).

*Mumu* also acknowledged that she was one of the parent helpers that started the *A'oga Amata* she attended. She learnt a lot as a parent helper and this encouraged her as well to learn new things.

My girl was really keen to look forward to alu i le (go to the) A'oga...as parents helpers I am happy we help to start the school for our children's gagana Samoa (Samoan language) and learn the Samoan way... lots of good memory...never give up for me as a parent...I learn new things and I am encouraged... me as a parent...e alu e malamalama (go and learn) extend the knowledge and experience (*Mumu*).

*Mumu's* statement about children 'learn the Samoan way' reinforces the transmission of Samoan identity that occurs at *A'oga Amata* discussed in chapter 1. The shared experiences that Pasifika individuals had, helped to form what researchers have called 'an emerging Pacific identity' in New Zealand (Anae 1998, 2010; Macpherson 1996; Mila-Schaaf, 2010). An emerging Samoan identity was being, created in new places of learning in the community. *Violeti* remembers parents coming to *A'oga Amata* for a place to be together with their children and people from their church. It was also another place to gather with people from the Samoan community in Christchurch.

We had lots of support from the parents...they enjoy their time coming then more children were coming and more parents were coming. ...it was a place to be together and enjoy the time...families keep coming because they want to fellowship with one another...it was like another home for us...we feel comfortable because we use our own language and our own culture you know...parents are shy in other schools because of the English but not here (*Violeti*).

The fact that families kept coming back to a place that was like 'home' meant that Samoan families felt accepted and included at *A'oga Amata*. This extension to home connected their language, culture and 'place' intimately, where ways of knowing, knowledges and language related to their own Samoan world views (Kirova, 2006). *Violeti* raised a significant point about parent involvement; where parents from minority cultures are more likely to participate and be involved in their children's



education when they are comfortable (Ministry of Education, 1996). The involvement of family and community is also supported and encouraged within the New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996).

### **‘Belonging’**

The definition used for this study on ‘belonging’ does not look into the physical building of each *A’oga Amata*, because the experience of ‘belonging’ involves far more than occupied physical buildings (Kearns & Smith 1994). The social factors of ‘place’ where the experience of belonging are considered and constructed of sets of social relations give rise to variable degrees of belonging (Tuan, 1977). The variable degrees of belonging here relates to ‘place’ as discussed earlier, where of being included, accepted and valued, can impact on ones sense of belonging (Albrow, 1997). To include a Pasifika lens the importance of ‘Pacific Connectedness’ that has been used by other researchers shows the importance of Pasifika peoples being connected with other Pasifika peoples enhances their sense of belonging. ‘Pasifika Connectedness’ also includes the ‘need to belong’ by including the affirmation of ethnic identity that encompasses cultural practices, cultural engagement and cultural language (Phinney, 1990).

This ‘Pasifika connectedness’ did not just draw in Samoan and Pasifika peoples but also other minority cultures like African families. *Violeti* remembers when one Zimbabwe child came to *A’oga Amata* and this lead to many more families coming.

That’s the first thing they see is our coloured face...we welcome them into our family and as a denomination that will look after them... *A’oga* should be like that to welcome anyone no matter what race or whatever...we welcomes everyone...who knew that the Zimbabwe community would love to come to our preschool eh...we had a doctor family that brought their daughter that use to be in the Under 2s...once they brought ‘A’ then more and more of the families came because they could see our place was good for them and they feel comfortable. They are so clever...they could speak their own language and English and it’s easy for them to pick up the Samoan language (*Violeti*).

A number of researchers have emphasised how Samoan migrants have made conscious efforts to achieve a balance between the two worlds of *Fa'aSamoa* and New Zealand society (McCallin, Paterson, Butler & Tumama Cowley, 2001). One of the most obvious features of Samoan communities in New Zealand is the way Samoan migrants have recreated and adapted Samoan institutions in a new land (Meleisea & Schoeffel, 1998). Women in this study talked about *A'oga Amata* as an adaption of the Samoan village and family life. Children are looked after and taught by family and people within the village. *Piniki* states:

We grew up in the islands and in our village the parents, our family were all there to support looking after our children...the teaching you know ever since I was young was from us as parents and from the schools and church. Now that I am teaching it's you know just something to give back and you know that God is there for you all the time, so yes quite busy here to be teaching and helping out with things in church and also in the family as well. Here we try and be like our village back home...the way we look after one another and the way that we can teach our children...but we also need to help each other to adapt to the *Palagi* way as well (*Piniki*).

In New Zealand full village support is impossible due to how separated Samoan people live geographically. However, the connectedness that the Samoan community can have with one another in a specific 'place' is achieved at *A'oga Amata*. *Samasama* talks about how hard it is in New Zealand compared to Samoa, where she is used to family helping each other out with the raising of the family. However, *A'oga Amata* became a place that teachers and parents could support one another living in a *Palagi* (white) world as *Piniki* stated. This reinforces what Tagoilelagi (1998) found in her study, where *A'oga Amata* not only reinforced Samoan identity but it also helped to bridge the gap between the families and the environment in New Zealand and their own culture.

### ***Teu le vā***

To extend the meanings of 'place' and 'belonging' already discussed, and to embrace *A'oga Amata* as a place of belonging within Pasifika ways of knowing, the Pasifika concept of *va*, *va'a* or *vaha* (space) will be used. The meaning of *va* (space in

Samoan) has been defined and translated by Pasifika researchers as a “space that transcends a physical dimension or construct” (Mara, 2013, pg. 61). This space upholds all that is precious, valued culturally and spiritually within social relationships. The Samoan metaphor *Teu le vā* is defined as a place or site of action in which social interactions are productive to those who are part of the place (Airini et al., 2010). It also means to keep or look after all the relationships within the space in a harmonious order (Mara, 2013). This study affirms that the *va* (space) of *A’oga Amata* was a site of action that was productive to the Samoan community where Samoan women aspired to *teu le vā* by protecting and guarding all that is precious and valued by Samoan peoples.

McDonald (2004) looked at ‘va’ within Pasifika centres provided valuable definitions on Pasifika pedagogy and ways that beliefs and values are transmitted through the Samoan language, nuances and meanings. The language and culture here is not the only important foundation that can be achieved at *A’oga Amata*, but also the values and beliefs that are essential in Samoan *aiga* (family) such as collective wisdom, respect, love and service. McDonald (2004) also talks about a spiritual core that Samoan and Pasifika peoples have that are also an important element taught within *A’oga Amata*. Christian beliefs are part of all *A’oga Amata* philosophies which shows the close connections and support that *A’oga Amata* has to the church as well as the influence that the church had on the centre programmes.

## **The Church**

Many Pasifika researchers claim that without church support most of the *A’oga Amata* in New Zealand would not have been created or had survived (Burgess, 1988a; Ete, 1993; Tagoilelagi-Leota, 2010). The church is seen to hold a central socialising role within the Samoan community in the ways it supports and promotes aspects of *Fa’aSamoa* but also helps Samoan people settle and belong in New Zealand. Churches were the backbone of the *A’oga Amata* movement the North Island (Burgess, 1998a). This was also the case with the women that were connected to *A’oga Amata* in Christchurch. All the women that were part of this study belonged to language nests and licensed *A’oga Amata* that were affiliated with the churches that they belonged to.

When *Meamata* first arrived in Christchurch as a single mother she only had the support of her aunty. When this support was no longer available, she found refuge in some Western spaces (The Women's Refuge and a Housing New Zealand home) but it was in the church and *A'oga Amata* that she found a place to belong for her and her baby.

I was a single mother at that time living with my aunty and you know I don't know where to start from because that's my very first child. You know without parents and without sisters or brothers to help me but it was good support from family, friends and also staff at *A'oga Amata*. It's so helpful for me if I think back because I remember the last time when my aunty...she separated you know from her husband... my aunty goes to her friend, taking me and it was not enough room for us, for me and my daughter to have a room. And then we end up going to the place that you know the refuge for families for me and my daughter. That's when they find me a Housing New Zealand one bedroom for me and my oldest one. That's you know so sad when I think back to the first time that I just have children and how I really want to bring up my children good and safe...it's good when I get picked up to go to *A'oga* with my baby...I was blessed to be with others in my church looking after my baby and I am not alone in the daytime (*Meamata*).

*A'oga Amata* was more than a place to belong for *Meamata* and her baby. As a single mother living on her own, she found safety and comfort in a new country away from her family in Samoa. *A'oga Amata* also gave her the opportunity to be with others in her church during the day. This highlights the vital involvement of the church in supporting the Samoan community and *A'oga Amata*. What *Meamata* also shared reveals the importance of 'sense of place' for Samoans settling into New Zealand and how the church was the main system of support for many Pasifika peoples when they first arrived (Meleisea and Schoeffel, 1998).

Ete (1993) who also did research of *A'oga Amata* in the North Island stressed that "without the church, many Pacific Island people, especially the Samoans, the largest migrant population in New Zealand, would have no access to early childhood education done in their own language and culture" (Cited in Podmore, 1993, pg. 90).

This claim supports how *A'oga Amata* was established in Christchurch with the support of the churches that they were founded under. The church was the main support for the language nest that *Moana* was involved with. It was the church that decided to become licensed and to attain leadership roles.

We all, were for about three years yes... we'd been running like everybody has to come together and work together in our hall and then the church decided to appoint somebody to be supervisor you know to supervise what we are doing in the programme we doing in the hall. And then we had a supervisor at the time which is good, that was good because when we became licensed we had the same supervisor (*Moana*).

*Moana* also talked about the support of their church pastor:

At the time we had our pastor. He was our main support...he was trying to do everything. So that helped a lot, that helped because the pastor before they'd been trying and that was when we were still doing our nest sitting in the hall. So then this young one came and do the theological training and he became pastor and married and then he came back to pastor our church. So maybe he had that as a hard tool because they used to have little ones from their family coming to the language nest and they go to school still in the language nest (*Moana*).

*Violeti* who helped to set up the first language nest in Christchurch recalls how it began at her church with the support of their minister's wife:

We had our *A'oga Amata* there in church hall every Saturday afternoon started about 3 o'clock...before the church choir started and then the children were having a rest and then the older people would have their *A'oga pese* (choir) and this was the starting of *A'oga Amata*. They never use to have it...the church was thinking of having a *A'oga Amata*... there and' G' was a very keen mother (wife of the minister) to do this one...and they choose me to be the first one to started this and it was very good to have it...it was part of the church (*Violeti*).

It was common for the church minister and in particular the minister's wife to be heavily involved in supporting and leading at *A'oga Amata* in the north island (Burgess, 1988a). The language nest and *A'oga Amata* that *Violeti* helped to set up was supported by the church minister and the church minister's wife became one of the main teachers. *A'oga Amata* here became an extension of the church where the church community could come together to support their children's learning (Utumapu, 1998). *Violeti* shares how this place of belonging involved the whole church at important events:

We have the whole church involved and when we have a birthday we always have the ministers there to say the prayer for the children...it's lot of food everybody is bringing something... a place for coming and eating there (*Violeti*).

*A'oga Amata* is seen here as a place where church members could fellowship and celebrate key milestones such as birthdays. Families from the church felt a 'need to belong' and connect with others where their cultural practices, cultural language and spiritual values and beliefs were affirmed (Phinney, 1990). However, within these new spaces came new challenges and tensions where teaching, leadership roles and relationships needed to be worked out.

## **Challenges**

The participation and involvement of parents at *A'oga Amata* gave them the opportunity to be with other parents from their church, participate and help out in the programme, learn new skills and develop their thinking about their children's education (Utumapu, 1998). However this also came with the challenges in how to run an organisation and manage the people within the programme. When teachers became qualified, this also put them on a different level with parents especially when centres became licensed and needed to comply with regulations on quality practice (Mara, 2000, 2006). One of the most challenging areas that women talked about was the guidance of children's behaviour. *Violeti* talked about how at first parents felt that it was acceptable to openly discipline their children:

It was wonderful to see the families coming...they are comfortable to come here and bring their children but this was a challenge too for us when we first started...some disagreements (laughs)... that's the other challenge working together with the team and I had to support parents with their own problems into the preschool and sometimes they would fight there and I would say "Hey! This is not a fighting place but a place for the children to be peaceful and don't 'oke' (scold) here". We also had to stop parents smacking their children here and that was hard because many of them are used to doing it in church and then they wonder why we tell them to stop here (*Violeti*).

*Violeti* also found behavior guidance a challenge with the parents and grandparents that came to support the language nest in their church hall:

Sometimes the grandparents and parents bring little ones and end up telling off other children who are family or will sasa (smack) the children. This is where us teachers have to be strong to tell parents that we are doing a peaceful and loving programme for their children. It was good for us to work together to do this for our children... (*Violeti*).

In Utumapu's (1998) study, it was also highlighted that supervisors of *A'oga Amata* had concerns where aspects of Samoan culture were highly problematic in New Zealand. This included child discipline and how children were to be disciplined within *A'oga Amata*. Utumapu argued that cultural expectations did not coincide with what was acceptable in New Zealand. Educating the Samoan way or the *Palagi* way were challenges that all women experienced. Women became in 'two minds' about what to teach and what was considered 'quality' teaching as shared by *Piniki* and *Meamata*.

I think parents find it hard to deal with their children here the *Palagi* way, children and the parents ...especially with the behaviour...yes. It is hard to think about the way we need to do things...educate the Samoan way or the *Palagi* way?" (*Piniki*).

Yeah. So that's a good sharing of the training because if I didn't go there I wouldn't be able to help other mothers of my church and other friends that I

realise that you know they...they started to do the same pattern like me when I was in Samoa and they all do the same you know. They, they it's a lot of time stopping, stopping, stopping. So they're not giving them...their children the freedom to make their choices of what to do. So I was doing okay with Tama you know. It's taking all the learning and using the best from what I learn...the Samoan way and the *Palagi* way (*Meamata*).

Some women thought that what they had learnt during their studies was 'better' than the way that some of the parents interacted with their children especially relating to discipline. This 'place' of being included and accepted was hard when parenting styles clashed with teaching within *A'oga Amata*.

When I went to do the teaching that's when I realised oh-oh there is a lot... more...I learn a lot from them. You know like I brought up Tama (*pseudonym name for son*), when Tama was little I admit that I didn't spend much time you know talking with him. But when I did the training, when Tama was still young that's when I started to turn, turn a little bit around... turn my life around you know to try and spend more time with my son. Yes I spend more time with my son... my Mum wasn't here to help me so I had no idea how... my Mum brought us up like what I was doing to Tama. But when I go to training it has a huge impact in me, in my life. I was happy and blessed that Tama was still young at the time when I did the training. It was that time I can still try and feed him you know, because I was just doing the same thing you know like "don't do that, don't do this", you know those things and I realise that when I went to training and joined the Early Childhood, no that's not the way to you know, it has to be, there are some times you say no but there are some kind of lines you know and boundaries to set for your children but try not to stop him from doing everything you know. That's what I used to do (*Meamata*).

*Meamata* is grateful for her training as she was able to pass on her knowledge and learning to other mothers who she could see were parenting the same way she was in the past. This place where parents can share knowledge and skills within the programme is supported by the early childhood curriculum Te Whāriki (Ministry of



Education, 1996).

The concern about the type of education that children were receiving at *A'oga Amata* compared to education at a mainstream *palagi* centre is a common one amongst Samoan parents. Luafutu-Simpson (2006) in her research showed that some New Zealand born Samoan parents chose to take their own children to mainstream centres due to their own concerns about quality and expectations of school readiness. While participants in this study did not specifically mention parents that chose to take their children to mainstream centres, they did discuss parents who wanted to bring their children to *A'oga Amata* to avoid language and cultural loss for their own children.

I know some of my own family who bring their children here because they do not know the language themselves but want their children to learn. It is good to see them coming with their children because I know that it is not easy for some of their parents to come to a place that can maybe be uncomfortable for them. Some of the teachers here are also learning to speak better Samoan and better English so we are all helping one another. I am lucky my kids know the language and they are now starting their families and are bringing my moko here... (*Mumu*).

I wish that there was somewhere for the first generation to go to back in the 1970s because many of us parents were busy working at the time...there are many Samoan born here in New Zealand that do not know how to speak Samoan and that is sad but it is good for them to bring their children here to *A'oga*...some of them are taking their kids to other *Palagi* preschool and then their kids will not learn anything too... (*Samasama*).

*Meamata* talks about the time when some of her friends from church told her to take her son to a Kindergarten as they were worried about her son not knowing English at Primary school.

You know some of my friends told me to pull my son out and take him to kindergarten. And I said what for? They said because at school the teachers complain that your child doesn't speak English. I said no he's fine. He'll be automatically learning the English, he's fine. He has to maintain his first

language, that's my idea when I started. But if I wasn't trained or wasn't involved and no knowledge I just take him to Kindy you know same like all the other ones thinking that they had to learn the English. So many of us start to worry about our children's education once they start Primary school especially with the language... (*Meamata*)

It is interesting how *Meamata* mentioned that if she wasn't trained then she would not have known how important it was for her son to maintain the language at an early age. It is unfortunate that many parents are not supported or given vital knowledge regarding second language acquisition or the benefits of their children being bilingual or multilingual. Some parents ended up taking their children to mainstream centres where the language and culture was not maintained (Luafutu-Simpson, 2006). Research in this area suggests that children who are fluent in their own home language will readily pick up another language such as English in schools (Kirova, 2006). *Meamata* goes onto say:

I feel sad that our people are worried about their kids when they take them to the Primary school. Many parents keep asking me when I'm teaching what they should do and I tell them to keep speaking to their kids at home in the Samoan language and keep bringing their kids here to *A'oga Amata* so that they don't lose the language. The English will come once they go to the Primary school. That is what happened to my own children (*Meamata*).

It is enlightening that *Meamata* was able to use the knowledge that she gained while studying to become a qualified teacher to give advice to parents at *A'oga Amata* that were not sure about their children's education. For instance, there is much research to support the view that children who are fluent in their own home language or have a foundational language will readily pick up another language such as English (Kirova, 2006). *Violeti* felt that language was important as it was part of Samoan identity and would help children know who they were as Samoans.

The notion of being included, accepted and valued can have variable degrees of ones sense of belonging (Albrow, 1997). This was the case for *Meamata* who was the only unqualified teacher part of this study. She openly shared her concerns of how she felt she was not always well treated by other staff due to not being qualified.

You know sometimes I feel very down because I've been here for quite a long time but still... because I have to speak up sometimes when we have our staff meetings you know. It's not fair for me, I'm not qualified I'm looking at you (other qualified staff), you are supposed to be helping me and it looks like I got no help from you at all. You are sometimes looking at me and you are copying what I am doing. But I was thinking oh these children are probably wanting to have messy play for ages but you know thinking if I'm not qualified... you know even though they don't put my pay as qualified but they should look at my performance you know in a way. Because I think really it's not fair for me for the Ministry to come, look at all on the board...and they are all my learning stories on the board and where are the qualified teachers you know... (*Meamata*)

*Meamata's* feelings of undervalue impacts on '*teu le vā*' where rigid preconceptions or assumptions can created tensions within the '*va*' (Mara, 2013). These concerns also raise the issue of colonial incursions related to qualifications that have entered into Samoan spaces as discussed in the previous chapter. Fortunately, for *Meamata* she enjoyed teaching at *A'oga Amata* and did plan to become a qualified teacher in the near future.

If I am not happy teaching here then I will not be able to do it...especially when some teachers are not helpful to me sometimes. I enjoy the children and love teaching our Samoan language and what is important to us. The Lord gave me this job and I need to look after it...and I know he will help me when the time comes to study (*Meamata*).

*Piniki* also felt that she was treated differently when she was studying at the same time while working at *A'oga Amata*.

I am happy that I am qualified now because the other teachers know that you can do the programme properly and are professional now. It's funny because when we were just in the hall not licensed yet we didn't have the pressure of training. It's like when you are just a student teacher doing your placement and the other teachers and parents can't treat you the same because you are not...sometimes you can't help but feel uncomfortable when they treat you

like you are not a teacher yet. I just ignore it because I know that I was going to be qualified soon and we are doing our best for the children. But I also think that when we see other teachers that are not trained we do the same...it's not a big thing and I am not worry about it anymore because I am qualified now and we have to always think about the children first (laughs)...(*Piniki*).

It is interesting to note that *Piniki* was not concerned about being unqualified once she became a qualified teacher, even though she did experience teachers and parents treating her differently when she was training and working at *A'oga Amata*. This illustrates the significant shift from when language nests were first set up to the time when *A'oga Amata* became licensed centres. Samoan women did not need to be trained teachers but once their centres became licensed they had no choice. It makes me question whether women like *Meamata* and *Piniki* would have felt more accepted and valued as a teaching at language nests when their qualifications were not in question. This supports the theory where the variable degrees of being included, accepted and valued, can impact on ones sense of belonging (Albrow, 1997).

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has provided more understanding on why Samoan women established *A'oga Amata* within Christchurch. *A'oga Amata* was a place of belonging for children, families, and women; an extension of village life, home and church setting. *A'oga Amata* was more than an educational institution, but a place where Samoan women aspired to '*teu le vā*' so that families felt accepted and included. Colonial incursions of western occupational status created tensions within the '*va*' though these challenges were minor compared to the greater good that these women believed they were doing. The next chapter will focus on how women's experiences of *A'oga Amata* impacted on their roles as Samoan women.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: FINDINGS**

### **SAMOAN WOMEN AS *POUTU* OF *A’OGA AMATA***

#### **Narrative 7: What is my role?**

As I was growing up my mother would tell me that when I became a wife, my husband should always come first and when I became a mother that my family would always be my first priority. She would use the saying “you have no more life” meaning that as a wife and mother what I did for my family should always come first. The duties that I was to undertake as a wife and mother were engrained into me since I was a little girl. Mum taught me how to cook, bake, sew, serve and do house work - always with a smile on my face. Household duties were drilled into me and my older sister and it was the norm for us to know the ‘gendered’ roles our parents gave us. My brothers did the jobs outside the home like the lawns and the garden, the *umu* (traditional cooked food on hot lava rocks outside). I can remember if we made a mistake or didn’t carry out our duties properly mum would yell at us and say “how are you going to find a husband and keep one like that?” Homework was done after all the chores had been done and this also meant that when visitors were over late or an event was on then we often slept late even on a school night. Everything had to be spotless before bedtime. I often thought my mum had OCD...but a ‘fob’ kind where all *tautua* (service) was on open display and the family name was accounted for by the work we did. If we brought any shame to the family name then mum surely let us know and did what she could to make amends (she once ripped off the ear of a woman in Samoa who said nasty things about my grandmother...but that is another story!).

Mum served with ease and grace. She could cook, set a meal down, converse with people and clean up with such swiftness. If my sister and I got in the way when she was doing something important or if we slowed her down, we were told abruptly to “move”! Mum had a lot of jobs cleaning and she took pride in her work especially when she was acknowledged for it.

#### **Marriage & Motherhood**

I married my university sweetheart Pana in 1998 and he was also a New Zealand born Samoan. We had a lot in common as first generation NZ born Samoans, trying to get through tertiary studies and carrying out our parent’s ambitions of studying and getting a good job. As the eldest of three brothers, and having a dad that was a high chief, Pana had responsibilities and expectations within his family that I had to support. We were both 25 years old when we had our first daughter Vevesi Sara Togiaso. I instantly fell in love with her. Her jet black hair with rosy full lips and

dark almond eyes pierced against her fair skin. Here was a precious gift brought into this world, an amazing miracle ...she was perfect.

I loved motherhood. It was hard with the sleepless nights and breastfeeding but I tried very hard to be the best mum I could be. I read books on everything and took advice from my mum and mother in law. The support I received from my family was amazing and I am so indebted for their support even though I didn't appreciate it at the time. To be honest I was a better mother than a wife (my husband would share this at times) as baby Vevesi became my number one focus. Every time she cried I would pick her up and either breastfeed or hold her. She was never short of my cuddles and attention. My mother's engrained messages of that I would "have no more life" was taking effect. Pana and I were still students at University at the time and so money was quite tight. Pana was working part time at the university Foundry doing bouncing and security work so we were living off the family benefit while Pana was bringing in extras for our other bills. We stayed in a small 2 bedroom flat for \$75 a week, with little money to spare but even with our humble beginnings, Pana & I still look back at those days as precious memories. We learned how to make Vevesi's needs a priority – made sure she had her nappies and food and if we got tired of the toast and mince meals we ate, we would pay Pana's parents a visit for the Samoan cuisine that we missed. Nana Vevesi's fruit pies, trifles and sweet n sour chicken were to die for!

I now turn to my analysis of my earlier experiences.

My stories are about my life as a girl growing up and the values and roles that my mother felt was important for me to know and learn as a mother and a wife. Even though I did not think that my childhood upbringing would impact much on my role as a wife and mother, looking back I can see that they have. When I became a teacher at *A'oga Amata*, like the other women I was able to expand and grow into other leadership roles within my own church and within the teaching profession. Volunteering as a parent helper was rewarding, challenging and scary! Never had I questioned my own culture, my own identity and my own sense of belonging more than when my family became involved at *A'oga Amata*. I believe it was because I was in constant diaspora, feeling that I could never belong fully in one particular place. After teaching for over a year I was fortunate to be part of an ERO assessment. The following narratives are an example of when I clashed with other Samoan women teachers regarding our 'roles' of being a teacher at *A'oga Amata*.

## **ERO visits and my concerns**

A'oga Amata was preparing for their second ERO visit and you could feel the nerves in the air as the day drew closer. The centre was spotless; all resources had been checked and unsafe ones replaced and old ones thrown out. There was a church working bee that cleaned out rubbish and did the gardens outside. At staff meetings our Supervisor talked about our roles, areas that we needed to improve on and being open to talk to the ERO officers when they came. We all had to get our profile books up to date and programme planning sheets within our folders completed. Our head teacher of the Under 2s asked me to take the planning sheets home to check if they were all up to scratch and if the connections we made to Te Whāriki made sense. I was more than happy to do this as I felt that at least I could do something useful to help out. It was a great time for us to think carefully about our programme and the areas that we were doing well in and the areas that we knew we could improve on.

The day of the visit arrived and the ERO officers were welcomed into the centre and had a chat to our supervisor in the staff room first. Something that was discussed made our Supervisor uneasy as when she came out she immediately started telling us that we were going to feed the children on the *fala* (mat) instead of the tables. We were not sure why she decided to do this and before she could finish explaining anything, it was time for kai. We followed her lead as she put the *fala* down and we sat with the children and fed them sitting down with them on the mat. It went well but was tricky for the children who were used to sitting down at the tables with their noodles, having their plates at ground level. We did manage with four of us staff being to support with feeding. There were no children that were in high chairs as they had already been fed earlier. I can remember thinking why we were told to do this and why the sudden change? Later on I found out that our Supervisor wanted us to do this as she felt that it was better for the officers to see how attentive we were to the children during kai, and it was best for us to feed them down at their level. I'm not sure if I agreed with this or if she may have had a differing idea as to what ERO was expecting to see in our Under 2 programme. I thought that what we were already doing was fine.

Later in the day an ERO officer wanted to speak with me about my teaching and experiences. She questioned if I was trained and when she found out that I wasn't, she asked if I had planned to do some training. She also questioned my use of the Samoan language and I had to disappoint her again by sharing I was not fluent but had made a commitment to "revitalise" the language I had lost as a child. I felt that my level of *Fa'aSamoa* was appropriate for the Under 2 children's level though.

There was one question that started off an interesting conversation about how the teachers interacted with children and if we used open-ended questioning with the

older toddlers to spark their interests. We chatted about 'quality' interactions and I asked about the 'quality' this officer was looking for as I felt that there were some cases where this was different with her being *Palagi* and us being Samoan. She started to talk about Te Whāriki and if I was familiar with the document (was this because I was untrained?) Our supervisor must have picked up on how tense the conversation was getting in the staff room so she came and asked if I could go back to support the children sleeping as there were some babies waking up. I took this cue to 'stop my inquiry' and went to join the other teacher in the sleeping area.

When I asked our supervisor about this conversation later she said that she was worried that the ERO officer was becoming uncomfortable with my questions and she just wanted the whole day to go smoothly. I shared with the Supervisor that I felt that we should be able to ask and challenge the ERO officers as they should be people equipped to take these questions, but my Supervisor wanted me to think about the hard work that the whole team had done to get through the assessment. She didn't want anything to jeopardise the whole visit. I could understand why our supervisor wanted to please the officers but if we did not agree with their way of assessing us then could we not question this? I continued to feel uncomfortable thinking about this incident and what my Supervisor said to me. However, I didn't question her about it again as I felt that it was not my place to question her authority. There were a couple of staff that talked to me afterwards about the way I questioned the ERO officer saying that they were happy that I did. They too felt that the officers were looking for a '*Palagi* quality'. This made me think about what 'quality' looked like within *A'oga Amata*.

When the ERO officers delivered their summary with staff and the management committee after the second day we received a positive report. ERO were happy with our progress and wanted to visit us in two years' time which the staff were all excited to hear. When they shared about how we could improve on communication with children and to use strategies such as open ended questioning, I had to bite my tongue to not say anything. I guess these officers would not understand if we shared how unnatural it was for us to ask open ended questions to our children in Samoan. Children learnt by being told how to do something and by observing and then having a go for themselves. The western way of learning 'with' children seemed alien for some teachers until we were trained and taught how to do this. I sat in silence when our teaching team struggled to put together Samoan open ended questions at the next planning meeting, trying to follow through with the ERO recommendations.

Once again, I now turn to my analysis of my earlier experiences.

When I think about how much my role as a Samoan women has been influenced from my involvement in *A'oga Amata* I would say my role as a mother and teacher



has changed immensely. I am grateful that I was able to be with my daughters and work at the same time. I was able to experience a full time job and balance roles of motherhood and working. I was also able to specialise and do a Graduate Diploma in Early childhood education, taking advantage of a Centre-based programme where I could work and study at the same time. My passion in teaching and in early childhood education blossomed from my involvement in *A'oga Amata* where I took on board other leadership roles within the early childhood sector, and within the Pasifika community following my passion for Pasifika education and cultural competence. While women in this study experienced a shift in the traditional roles they had as Samoan women, I experienced a shift in my views about Samoan born women, hence was able to learn more about their journeys and appreciate what they did to establish *A'oga Amata*. Sometimes these women negotiated their roles and actions to get the outcome they wanted, to support the best interests of the whole centre. Leadership roles lifted women's own sense of status and confidence; whereas my own confidence grew within the Samoan community by being able to converse with parents more comfortably and use more of the Samoan language within events that I had avoided in the past.

The ERO incident illustrated how hard it was for me to sometimes voice my own concerns and opinion with other women especially in leadership positions. It also highlighted how much my role as a New Zealand born Samoan women had changed from being a complacent observer and participant as a young school student, to one speaking up for injustices at *A'oga Amata*. Being part of a place where I could be Samoan but struggled to be 'Samoan enough' was like having schizophrenia. I was sometimes included in conversations and decisions made by staff and at other times I went with the majority vote even when I disagreed with something. Many times I was asked to take the lead in written reports or documentation due to my strengths in the English language. I felt good being able to use these strengths to help out where I could and to also feel useful. The rest of this chapter looks at the perspectives of the Samoan women interviewed in this study in how *A'oga Amata* impacted on the multiple roles and identities that they had.

## Introduction

This chapter will provide understanding on the second part of the main question for this study that looks at how women's experiences of *A'oga Amata* impacted on their roles as Samoan women. The findings for this study reveal that women's involvement of *A'oga Amata* was another role added to the multiple roles that they had. Samoan world views and the main themes of motherhood and *poutu* (main strength of the family) will be discussed to highlight the shift in these traditional roles and meanings for Samoan women. Leadership roles lifted women's own sense of status within the Samoan community as well as within New Zealand society. *A'oga Amata* impacted on women's roles significantly as they became activists of their own values and beliefs.

## Motherhood

In pre-colonial times the behaviour of Samoan woman was guided by ideals of *tautua* (service) and *mamalu* (respect) where serving the family was highly valued and satisfying (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1996). The Samoan spirit of independence and self-reliance empowered both men and women in their roles. Some researchers argue that cultural patriarchies within *Fa'aSamoa* did not exist prior to European contact (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1996; Meleisea and Meleisea, 1987). Samoan women were represented by two particular roles of 'sister' and 'wife'. 'Sisters' had a higher rank than 'brothers' and were a highly valued status group in the village. *Taupou* (daughter of the high chief) another associated sister role was held in high esteem, with the *aualuma* (unmarried girls and women) (Meleisea & Meleisea, 1987). If women had a *matai* (chief) as a husband, then she became a *faletua* (wife of the high chief) and took on the role of wife different to that of 'sister'. There was no specific role of 'motherhood' confined to the home until the arrival of the first missionaries to Samoa (Meleisea & Meleisea, 1987).

According to Meleisea and Meleisea (1987) the arrival of the English missionaries from 1830 onwards brought about radical changes in the two main roles of women. Missionaries promoted the sanctity of marriages, of parents living together and the mother's role in raising the children. The missionaries wanted to replicate the

middle-class values in Samoa where the man was the main breadwinner and the woman was the home-maker (Meleisea & Meleisea, 1987). There became a restriction of the *taupou* and the *aualuma* where today they are only used mainly for ceremonial purposes. Mission education also separated areas for boys and girls where women were encouraged to support children and education. After Samoa accepted Christianity then women were also included in church roles. Women sought as wives for ministers also became a highly sought role within the village (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1996).

The *Matai* (Chief) system of *Fa'aSamoa* has continued with the main roles of women as 'mothers' and 'home maker' to the present time. The hierarchy within the system of *Fa'aSamoa* includes a specific place and status for mothers. All childcare, household chores and anything to do with raising children and organising the family fall on the role of the mother (Utumapu, 1998). The mother in the Samoan village leads and oversees everything that goes on in the home as also described by *Mumu* and *Meamata*:

Mum is the role model of the family...everything in the family is on the mother's head (*Mumu*)

As I told you before my Mum said that's my first job...the important job to be a mother, if I am looking after my children and support their needs...they will be there for me and they will have time for me like I always make time for them (*Meamata*)

In New Zealand the role of motherhood in being primarily responsible for childrearing and maternal roles was also the case for women in this study. *Meamata* mentioned the importance of being a mother was encouraged by her own mother which shows how these roles are passed down. She also felt reassured that her own children would also be there for her in the same way that she was there for them. However, family and village support that mothers received back home was something that was obviously missing in New Zealand as shared by women like *Samasama* who compared motherhood in the islands back home.

Different, easy life back home... life without lunch or bag at a'oga, fa'alavelave...most of time leai se mafutaga (no work) as a mum I do washing, le vao (lawns), leai se mea mafutaga (no work to do) to do homework like here in N.Z...we always here with the kids...in Samoa extended family to support the family not here in NZ...in Samoa the parents are always there to support family...NZ se fa'amafafa le tamamiti (lots of hard work to do for the children)... le fa'aPalagi (*Palagi* family) family – no support each other, e le alu ma le aiga (don't go with the family). E le support le tama le tina support a le family (*No support for the mother and the father for the family*) (*Samasama*).

Back in Samoa women felt that there was a lot more support for mothers from family and friends in the village compared to the support in New Zealand. Kernan (1969) discussed that caregiving in Samoa involved several family members of older siblings of both the mother and father's family, and in some instance the extended family. The mother spent most of her time with her infant baby (especially when breast feeding) but this time decreases as the child gets older in which older siblings are given more caregiving duties (Ochs, 1988). This was the case for *Moana* who shared her thoughts about looking after her eight younger siblings.

That's my challenge you know maybe it's my upbringing...that was a challenge you know because I'm the eldest of the family and my mum, I say this to everybody I talk to that my mum was having babies all the time you know, there's about nine of us. So who's there to look after? Who's there to help? Me. I think back to my poor parents, I know it's not just my parents it's also the Samoan way, give birth to the kids and leave it to the older kids to look after. So that's my role when I grew up and maybe that's why I'm always looking after children (*laughs*) (*Moana*).

The role of *Moana's* mother here was more of a supervisory role in organising how her younger siblings were to be looked after. Mothers did not necessarily do all the caring themselves but are supported by family. This was one of the main reasons why women in this study thought it was a lot harder being a mother in New Zealand than back in the islands.

Yes the role as a mother is much harder here...for example I have nephews and nieces staying with me the whole week and go home in the weekend...I do my part in the family...church and my job as a teacher (*Samasama*).

It is important to note here that *Samasama* refers to her 'part' as a mother within the family, church and her job teaching at *A'oga Amata*. In Samoa life is considered easy to *Mumu*:

At home in Samoa I never work it's the easy way...nofo loa le fale (stay at home)... but here tele alu le a'oga (go a lot to the school) na fai le galuega (do the work) and other work like P...(names a cleaning company)...you have to have money for everything here...Samoa is the easy life...(*Mumu*).

The 'easy life' back home is one that participants referred to as raising children together with the help of family in the village. Mothers have a high status in the home (after the father), and children have to listen and respect what they are told to do (Ochs, 1988). In New Zealand the status that mothers have is the same; however the roles have changed for mothers due to expectations that society has on mothers. For instance, *Samasama* talks about how mothers in New Zealand are expected to help out with their children's homework more and to be involved with schools.

But it's harder here because we are not living together to do that...that is why I like to look after my nephews and nieces that need to live with me during the week to be closer to school (*Samasama*).

Even though women agreed that being a mother in New Zealand was harder due to the absence of support from the family in the village, they did discuss the responsibility they had as mothers to provide what was best for their children, putting family first above everything else. According to *Meamata* bringing her children to *A'oga Amata* was the best she could do for her children as a mother.

I came to Christchurch to seek a better future for my child and have lived in Christchurch for maybe twenty-three years now and my initial entry into *A'oga Amata* was the parents for my preschool children. That turned into a career opportunity for me. I knew that's really important because thinking back home, we are so important to our parents you know. And, and I knew

that my first priority as a mum is to make sure R's got better education before I find something...that is why it's good for us to be involved here  
(*Meamata*).

*Moana* also talked about the importance of her role as a mother teaching her son, but how *A'oga Amata* was going to provide company for her only son.

I can stay home with my son I can teach my son all those things you know, the first teacher is you the mother you know, me the mother. But then I look at my son he all by himself, there was no brother, no sister at the time. So I made a choice that I wanted to bring him (*Moana*).

*Moana* recognises the importance of her role as a mother to her son. She says that even though she could teach her son everything, *A'oga Amata* helped to provide the fellowship and company that he needed with other children and adults. *A'oga Amata* impacted on the roles that Samoan women had where the place became another 'village like' setting that supported them as mothers. Furthermore, teaching was another role that was added to the multiple roles that they had to uphold as *poutu*.

### **Samoan women as *Poutu***

The *poutu* is the centre main *pou* (pole) structure that holds a traditional Samoan fale up and in place (Samu, 2005a). The *Poutu* model is used as a metaphor to describe Samoan values of *alofa*, *tautua* and *fa'aaloalo* that underpin *Fa'aSamoa*. Without the values of love, service and respect then *Fa'aSamoa* values would not be strong and be upheld. This study supports the research of Utumapu (1996) that affirms that Samoan women were *poutu* – the strength of her family, of the church and *A'oga Amata*. Samoan women were able to work through challenges and stresses of everyday life to support church, family roles and work at *A'oga Amata*. In the following statement, *Moana* talks about the multiple roles that she balanced daily.

Preschool is a big part of my life and there's another biggest role of my life and that's the church that's here. I'm always doing something either lead another department. The children's ministry and women, women's ministry that's what my roles are and every week I'm with children at the language

nest and then I'm with children again during the weekend, you know it's like, it's like that my life is never ending you know. It's, like I have to be, you know supporting all of these things in my life (*Moana*).

*Moana* talks about these multiple roles as areas that “have to be” supported. The expectations that women had as mothers and wives in supporting the home, church and *A'oga Amata* were their main priorities. Utumapu (1998) also highlighted that *tautua* (service) was an important part of their lives, so women were used to being busy and balancing many roles. Furthermore, Samoan women that taught at *A'oga Amata* experienced stressful times related to lack of support at home with housework or childcare. Unequal power relations between Samoan men and women, and involvement in language nests added an extra role to the multiple roles that Samoan women had to fulfil.

Two women in this study talked about unequal power relations that involved their husbands not helping out with domestic chores around the house. However, four women talked about their husbands taking on the roles of cooking and looking after children at school so that they could manage their roles better. The involvement of men in household tasks is not traditional work for men in Samoa; however the fact that more husbands were doing this in this study suggests that there are shifts in the roles of both Samoan women and men in New Zealand that needs to be researched further. What was also noticeable from the data was the fact that Samoan women in this study took on many roles that they struggled to balance at times. The *poutu* that they were trying to hold up and balance became shaky at times. This related to the unrealistic expectations that women had for themselves in what they could actually do well. For instance, *Mumu* talked about how hard it was for her when she had to study, work at another job, as well as teach on days she was free.

We have course at 8.30am till 4.30pm and then work at the factory from 5 till 1 in the morning in Hornby and then do my assignments...and some days I work at *A'oga Amata* when they need me. It was a very hard time for me but lucky M (husband) did the cooking and pick up kids (*Mumu*).

It is not hard to work out that *Mumu* was not sleeping very much when she was studying and working at the same time. Fortunately, after *Mumu* became qualified

then she was able to work full time at *A'oga Amata* as a qualified teacher and have enough money to support the family without going back to the factory. The fact that her husband supported her at home also is an example of what some Samoan men did to support the family at home too.

*Moana* ended up having a supervisory role at her *A'oga Amata* but needed to step down from her leadership role due to health reasons and family commitments.

So now I want to be resting from teaching the supervisor role of the school but I'm still a leader of the children's ministry so it's still the same. You know I still go with the children. I need to rest now...that is what my doctors say because I have been working too much and studying and looking after my parents at the same time. Now my husband is not well so I have to step down...I am waiting for the management to find another supervisor because they need someone... (*Moana*).

When I asked *Moana* about how she felt stepping down from her Supervisory role she said that she was relieved but was finding it hard to hold onto the role until management could find another Supervisor. She had been waiting at least four months and was worried about her husband that needed her at home, however she felt compelled to wait for another supervisor first before she could leave, doing what she thought was best for the school. This is an example of the *tautua* (service) and *alofa* (love) that *Moana* had for her role as Supervisor. She needed to know that her centre was in good hands before she could leave.

The fact that *Moana* had to wait a long time before the centre could find a replacement, also relates to the context of *A'oga Amata* in Christchurch. There are significant differences in the population and dynamics of the Samoan community compared to *A'oga Amata* in the north island. Due to the lower number of Samoan peoples in Christchurch, there was a smaller pool of Samoan women chosen to lead with supervisory and teaching roles. Women that had teaching experience like *Violeti* were encouraged to lead language nests and there was only a small core group of women that ended up teaching and helping out at language nests. This was hard for women that already had young families.



I remember T come and say “Common... you were a teacher in Samoa come along...but I have little ones I can’t teach when I have little ones but they said I could always bring them... (*Violeti*).

*Violeti* and *Moana* had to balance the multiple roles they had. Even though *Violeti* had young children, she agreed to lead at her church language nest. The *alofa* (love) that women had for their families and their children, influenced the *tautua* (service) that they did for their families and their children. These values that women had in looking after their family also extended out to their families back home in Samoa and the responsibilities and commitment of looking after their own parents (Liki, 2009). This was shown in the way they also chose to look after their parents in New Zealand. *Moana* talked about the challenges she had being the oldest in her family. She was responsible for looking after her mum and dad that came to live with her as well as her younger siblings from Samoa. With all of these responsibilities and expectations that are a part of *Moana*’s busy life, she refers to this as being a ‘real Samoan woman’ who has to do everything for her family. Fairbairn-Dunlop (1986) argues that women’s role as mother, wife and in this case as ‘daughter’ is constantly being compromised and challenged by ‘her’ other roles as an income earner, and ‘her’ roles within the family and community.

Yeah. I think as I say that’s, that’s a real Samoan woman me you know. I don't know I think that’s my upbringing that makes me this way because I used to do everything for my family. Mummy and Daddy and now I grew up I think that’s that’s how life is, you know to do everything the best I could. Everything has to be better and that’s why my son need to always say to me Mum you don't have to make it perfect you know, just do your best. Yeah (*Moana*).

*Violeti* struggled to find a balance in looking after her family and being involved in other commitments of church and teaching. She also looked after her parents when they were living with her for a short time:

There were lots of challenge to me...especially challenge to my own household...way that we travel...transport to go to the church...making sure that I am there for my boys and there to do the preschool and to do the

church...it was a very busy time and because I can't drive it makes F (husband) and my boys busy to drive for me here and there (*Violeti*).

*Moana* refers to the time that her parents lived with her family for six years as being very busy but the best times of her life.

I started to save so I can bring them over. So during that time I brought my parents three times you know home. There was a time when I got them here about six years; we stayed six years the best times of my life. Even though my house was crowded I come to work and I come home you know don't worry about all those crowded house I just look at my parents and give me the smile, you know happy heart knowing that they are here. I brought them over you know as doing that goals, there's a lot of goals. If you don't have goals you don't know where you're going and I'm happy because I even managed to bring all my sisters and brothers and now they're all gone separate way and have their own families and settle in New Zealand. Yeah it's just that I still miss my Mum because just come back from visiting my Mum in Samoa (*Moana*).

The commitment and sacrifice that Samoan women made for their families show the values of *Fa'aSamoa* that encompass what is important to them as Samoan peoples (Luafutu-Simpson, 2006). At times women struggled to be *poutu*, balancing the multiple roles that they had, however their success became evident when they became qualified teachers and experienced the rewards of their labour.

### **A higher status for Samoan women**

Pacific peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand place a high value on gaining tertiary educational qualifications (Mara, 2006). The acquisition of western formal education is highly favourable within the *Fa'aSamoa* as was shown in *tala mai fafo* narratives of selected Pasifika women, discussed in the study of Samu (2013). To receive a tertiary qualification not only raises the status of the individual, but also the family name and status of the family (Petelo, 2003).

When *A'oga Amata* became licensed, women had to train to become qualified teachers. This not only lifted the status of women in regards to recognition of a skilled occupation but also entry into a professionally recognised sector of early childhood education. This helped women to feel empowered as professional teachers within a Western context. Larner (1989) showed that Pacific women born overseas were over represented in the unskilled area of production and service work during the 1980s and 1990s. *A'oga Amata* provided the opportunity for Samoan women to break from these unskilled jobs and enter the skilled workforce of teaching with qualifications that they valued. *Piniki* states:

The diploma did help me with my teaching and my family now...as soon as I finished with my diploma I was really looking forward to work because I know that you know you've got the skills, and you know you have got something there to help (*Piniki*).

Samoan women also experienced a shift within their family status. For instance, when they became qualified teachers and were leading programmes and teaching at licensed *A'oga Amata*, some of the participants experienced better pay conditions and recognition within their family and church community. Women leadership roles were absent compared to men in the church; hence this was a shift for women that were more suitable for roles lower in the church hierarchy (Palenapa, 1993). According to *Piniki*, she was a committed member of her church for many years but *A'oga Amata* was the first time that she had a recognised leadership role that gave her the confidence to accept other leadership roles:

It was an honour to become a teacher and to study and train to be a qualified teacher. I was given a head teacher role not long after I started and this was a special time for me because I did not have a leadership role in my life before and then when I got this job, I was confident to accept other jobs in my church to lead (*Piniki*).

*Samasama* shared her excitement about the shift in her status at home where she had become the primary income earner:

I got a good pay now...better than when I working at the factory or hard jobs and I tell my husband you stay home and do all the house work...I will work...you stay home and do the massage (laughing). It was hard for me to go back to school and extend the knowledge but I did it and it is good for me and my teaching and my family. I have my family that need someone home all the time to do the kids school things and my husband is good to do that...I bring the money home now and my kids are happy to see that their dad and their mum can work together like this and have good jobs (*Samasama*).

Samoan women as the main income earner in New Zealand does more than reflect the increase in stay at home dads in the country (Statistics New Zealand, 2006) and the social acceptance or employment circumstances for men to be the primary caregivers compared to a couple of decades ago (Chesley, 2011). It also signifies a shift in the status of Samoan women within the Samoan culture where Samoan women are taking more recognised leadership roles. In the study of Palenapa (1993) Samoan men and women in Christchurch (that attended two churches) were asked if Samoan women should be working. Some felt that women should be given an equal opportunity to work if women had no children to care for, if women needed to work for financial reasons and if the father was unable to work. The fact that all women in this study did have children and also had husbands that could work discredits these reasons. A small group felt that women should not work at all due to their main role being at home to look after the family (Palenapa, 1993) were not supported by any women in this study, however some of the women may have supported these views earlier before *A'oga Amata* provided a doorway to a professional teaching career. Women could still be with their children and get paid to support their families in another homelike and village setting as discussed in Chapter 2.

*Moana* in the following statement also shares about the shift in her role at home. She highlights that fact that she now leads everything in her home by making decisions that relate to her children's education, discipline and also decisions to do with her family back in Samoa. This supports Fairbairn-Dunlop (1996) who contended that Samoan women had to make important decisions that allowed for employment, childcare and housework when the wage-earning economy created changes for women and family life. *Moana* talks about being both the mother and the father

where she has taken some of the responsibilities being the head of the family. This also supports what was discussed earlier about the changing roles of men in Samoan families.

So yeah...my family they say I'm the mother and I'm the father now in my family. So that's the biggest one for me. My poor husband he's so soft you know, you cannot hear him telling the kids off, it's only me, me, me. Me... telling the kids off you know. Like setting some rules and some principles for my kids...and because I can understand my kids but for my hubby we are so different... he is older and harder for him to understand the *Palagi* way (European) so, so yeah. So that's why I'm doing all those things. He just head of the family, yeah. But sometimes I take that job. That is me for the kids' school, their things at church and I am happy that whenever I need to send money to my family at home (Samoa) my hubby always support that (*Moana*).

*Samasama* and *Moana* both experienced shifts in their status by taking on leadership roles in their own homes and raising their confidence in their teaching roles at *A'oga Amata*. These women have become more confident and equipped than when they started at the language nest over 20 years ago. The participants that were interviewed twenty years ago in Utumapu's research (1998) were during the early years of becoming licensed centres. In this study, *Moana*, *Samasama*, *Mumu* and *Violeti* were all part of the licensing process when their language nest became licensed over 10 years ago. They are still teaching in the field at *A'oga Amata* at the present time and have more experience and knowledge than when they first were involved. In the interviews it was an honour to listen to these women speaking as experienced teachers and confident leaders within their roles at home, at church as well as within their leadership roles at the *A'oga Amata* at present. Unqualified staff also had ambitions to follow in the footsteps of these women who lead by example such as *Meamata* who was ambitions to train to become a qualified teacher and to also grow in that role.

I really want to train and become a supervisor in one of our *A'oga Amata* preschool, that's my aim. Look at M and T (other qualified teachers) ...they

did it and so I know I can too. I think that looking at my experience to be increased, knowing what to do with the role but even though I really want to do actions you know what I mean, you know... do some studies so I can be able to apply for that position (*Meamata*).

### **Activists of social justice**

This study used critical race theory (CRT) to help understand and explain how Samoan women were a part experiences that included racial oppression. CRT is committed to social justice to eliminate “racial oppression as a broad goal of ending all forms of oppression” (Delgado & Stefanic, 2012, pg. 21). The basic tenets of CRT that Delgado and Stefanic (2012) that this study draws upon are summarised as:

1. Racism is ordinary – the common experience of people of colour which is embedded in the structure and system of society.
2. The system of white supremacy serves important purposes for the dominant group both mentally and socially. The first point means that racism is not acknowledged or the treatment of equality for everyone across the board is sufficient for all people. The second point argues that the system benefits the dominant culture – those who are white and middle class.
3. Races and race is the product of social construction, thought and relation.
4. Race alone cannot account for the oppression of people. *Intersectionality* is the term used within CRT to recognise the multidimensionality of oppressions regarding race, sex, class, national origin, and sexual orientation. These last two elements draw attention to the multiple oppressions facing people of colour that account for inequality (pg. 21).

This study therefore argues that:

1. Samoan women experience some form of prejudice, discrimination or racism within their daily lives and within their experiences of *A’oga Amata*.
2. The system of the dominant culture in New Zealand does not serve the interests of indigenous peoples including Maori and Pasifika. This means that Samoan women experience marginalisation due to the limited power they have (or do not have). *A’oga Amata* is a learning place that supports the Samoan language and culture, however this study revealed that colonial incursions do act as barriers to the values and philosophy of the environment.

3. The way that Samoan women are treated and what they experience is due to how people's views have been socially constructed. This can be seen in the way that Pasifika peoples were treated as they flocked to this country to fill the labour demand for unskilled jobs during the 1970s. However; when the New Zealand economy was going through an economic decline and there was no longer a demand for island workers. Pasifika peoples were treated with prejudice and racism; with many sent home during the Dawn Raids. Pacific people in New Zealand have been historically represented as unintelligent, unmotivated, unhealthy and criminal (Ongeley, 1991).

4. Samoan women are marginalised by race, gender, social class and nationality. This study revealed how these women experienced multiple oppressions. Sharing their stories is one way of giving these women a voice to their experiences.

CRT has used the power of life stories to understand how people view race especially people who experience oppression. Autobiographies have been one way that people have shared these experiences with others and this study builds on my own stories of experiences within *A'oga Amata* and the stories of other Samoan women. This opens the door to alternative realities (Delgado & Stefanic, 2012), such as the realities of these Samoan women, where *talanoa* created meaning and understanding for themselves.

Women in this study became activists of their own values and beliefs. They did what they could to keep their values and beliefs alive as discussed in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2. They also challenged traditional roles even when it cost them their own reputation and safety. *Violeti* talked about a difficult time in her life when she made a decision to leave the church that her husband went to. She felt compelled to go to another church as it was a better fit for her own faith journey. This was not accepted by her husband. One incident left *Violeti* feeling lost and humiliated when her husband found her at her new church and forced her to leave with him. She explains that her husband did this to teach her a lesson and to warn the church that he would take matters into his own hands if she disobeyed him again.

I knew that if he (husband) found me at my church that he would do something like drag me out...he did this to warn the church and to teach me a lesson. It is not acceptable for a Samoan woman to not support her husband

and...to especially to leave the church he goes to. I couldn't breathe anymore at the old church, I wanted to recommit myself to Christ and be baptised...the old church would not understand these things...they don't baptise or commit themselves to God like this. They served themselves...so when he (husband) found me I knew that he was so angry. I disrespect(ed) him in front of everyone and I also did not listen to what he wanted me to do...I never yell...I just go with him. Some of the church and family are angry at me for doing this, he was a high chief leading the family here and look at what I do. It was a hard time for our family...the kids were still young and I know it hurt them [wipes her tears]. After this hard time...he let me go to my church but the kids had to go to his church...funny how things change...I thank the Lord for it (*Violeti*).

*Violeti* has brought up important values of *Fa'aSamoa* of *fa'aaloalo* (respect) and *tautua* (service). In most traditional Samoan marriages wives attend the church that her husband goes to. This is reinforced when a Samoan bride leaves her village in Samoa to live at her husband's village and attend the new church there. Before *Violeti* was married she attended a different church denomination in Samoa so this may have impacted on her decision to leave her husband's church. Even though *Violeti* went through some tough times, she still supported her own faith and beliefs and did not stop attending her new church. *Violeti's* story supports the critical theoretical tenets outlined by Delgado and Stefanic (2012) that argues that all women experience limited power and are marginalised by race, gender, social class and nationality. In Samoan society, after colonisation and conversion to Christianity, roles changed hence the social position of the male as the dominant gender reinforced the inferior roles of women (Mara, 2001). Patriarchy is part of the Samoan system placing men as the dominant social position within Samoan society. This can have significant implications for women who uphold traditional roles of supporting their families, are committed to upholding the *Fa'aSamoa* values of respect, love and service, but are dictated how this is to be done by the male. Samoan women like *Violeti* are left in inferior positions; contesting within these hierarchies while at the same time, left feeling guilty for not supporting their role as wives. Fortunately, *Violeti's* story ends well:



I had to do what was right for me and my belief...and guess what? Now after 20 years he [husband] is coming to support my church and listen to my church sermons and programmes that we have on. He enjoys listening to the guest speakers we have too. I am so happy and I give thanks to the Lord for changing my husband...if I didn't follow my heart back then and if the Lord didn't make me strong then we wouldn't be where we are today...we wouldn't be coming to this church and my mokopuna would not be coming to the *A'oga Amata* that the church runs. I am very blessed indeed.

All women in this study were heavily involved in church groups and roles due to their Christian beliefs and duty to the church. Only *Violeti* chose to attend a different church to her husband. This duty to church and faith in God comes from a long history since Samoa was converted to Christianity. Samoa's political, public and village life has been imbued with Christian references. The National Anthem has specific reference of *O le Atua lo ta fa'avae, o lota sa'olotaga* (to God is our foundation and freedom), and the National Motto is *Fa'avae I le Atua* (Samoa is founded on God) (Ahdah, 2013). Apart from *Violeti*, it was not clear whether Samoan women relied on their Christian faith for daily decisions and guidance however, this would be a fascinating research area to pursue. It was apparent that women related their success of *A'oga Amata* to their Christian faith in God. All participants shared their spiritual faith in God for helping them through their daily work. In many ways when challenges became too hard or if things did not work out then women felt that God would support them. They also made statements about teaching as a vocation or a calling that they believed came from their God.

I know that's my passion from God so next year I'm taking a role for both adventures, the age four to nine (group at church). So I'm teaching them on that at the moment. I've got passion. I know that's my passion from God. Without me starting with having a family I don't think that I will never think of working with children, especially bringing one child by myself that challenged me a lot but with the help of the church and A'oga I got through it (*Meamata*).

It is important to note here that the beliefs that women had in God and their

commitment to the church also supports their self-identity as Christians and those that valued and upheld *Fa'aSamoa*. It is hard to separate *Fa'aSamoa* and one's commitment and sacrifice to the church (Ahdah, 2013), and this research has also shown that women's commitment to *A'oga Amata* cannot be separated from *Fa'aSamoa* and the church. This can be seen in *Violeti's* statement who shares her gratitude and help to God for *A'oga Amata*, *Fa'aSamoa* and the church.

You know... without God to help me there would be nothing so you know with our God's help you know and I know that he's always there for me that's why, I pray to him to help me a lot. I know I'm really down sometimes and I'm really you know unsure about things...but I pray to him to please help me with this role, to help us as Samoan teachers and to help us to help the children with our *Fa'aSamoa* of who we are and everything that I'm taking at this preschool... you know my heart is always with children. His help is for the children at church and here at *A'oga*. The Lord gives me strength (*Violeti*).

## **Conclusion**

This chapter provided understanding on how women's experiences of *A'oga Amata* impacted on their roles as Samoan women. Women's involvement of *A'oga Amata* was another role on top of the multiple traditional roles that they had of being *poutu* – the main strength of the family, church and now *A'oga Amata*. New leadership roles lifted women's own sense of status within the Samoan community as well as within New Zealand society. *A'oga Amata* impacted on women's roles dramatically as they became activists of their own values and beliefs.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

### **Narrative 8: What this study is about**

In 2011, I had the privilege of presenting my research proposal for this study at a University Pasifika Talanoa Access to other Pasifika academics and researchers around the country. After I presented, I was asked an interesting question by a renowned Pasifika researcher and Senior lecturer: "What is *A'oga Amata* in Christchurch?" This question was followed by the comment: "*A'oga Amata* here [in Auckland] would be different to *A'oga Amata* there eh Jo?" Stunned, I apprehensively agreed to the comment but lacked the confidence and knowledge to provide an in-depth answer. I was still in the early stages of my research journey and did not fully comprehend what I was being asked.

After completing this study, and reflecting back on my research journey, I can now confidently say that I understand more about what I was asked in 2011. While I do have some thoughts now about how *A'oga Amata* are the same and are different to those in the north island, and what *A'oga Amata* in Christchurch is; to explain these differences in depth and in detail would require another research project. This is because my study looked more at why Samoan women established *A'oga Amata* within Christchurch and how their experiences impacted on their roles as Samoan women living in New Zealand. Even though my research did look at *A'oga Amata*, it focused more specifically on the women that established these special places of learning. I believe that for us to know about a place we must begin with the people that built them. Hence, the seven Samoan women and their narratives about establishing *A'oga Amata* in Christchurch is what this study is about.

Three years ago I wrote in my journal "I have struggled to find my own way through all the complexities and messiness with my lack of research experience as well as having to structure a thesis that was scholarly acceptable within a Westernised world of academia." (*Narrative 2: The beginning of my research journey*). Now that I have come to the concluding chapter, I feel an enormous sense of relief and an overwhelming gratitude to have reached this certain point in time. The struggles of making meaning and understanding were certainly part of the research process I experienced and needed to journey through to get here.

As a more confident beginning researcher, I present to you the final discussion and conclusion.

## Introduction

This chapter is a final discussion that responds to the main research question of this study: Why did Samoan women establish *A'oga Amata* within Christchurch and how did their experiences impact on their roles as Samoan women living in New Zealand? The research question will be discussed followed by a summary of the methodology used. A summary of the main findings will then be outlined revealing how *A'oga Amata* was a place of cultural transmission, a place of belonging and a place where women were given higher status and confidence as *poutu* as they balanced multiple roles. Lastly, the limitations and implications of this study will highlight improvements and what can be explored further.

## Research Question

The main research questions affirms that Samoan women who migrated to New Zealand to live were mainly responsible for the establishment of *A'oga Amata* in the country. These women were the main pioneers of *A'oga Amata* around the country and as this study revealed, was also the case in Christchurch. This research sought to examine and understand why these women chose to establish these places of learning, looking at their experiences of settling into this country and what their social motivations were for their children and families.

This question also relates to my personal journey as a parent helper and teacher at *A'oga Amata*. As a NZ born Samoan women, and as someone suffering from 'hybrid diaspora' there were times when I felt that I belonged at *A'oga* and times when I felt like I did not belong. There were times when I clashed with other women at *A'oga Amata* and times when we shared the same views of teaching and supported one another. Nevertheless, I marvelled at how these women worked hard to establish licensed *A'oga Amata* and frequently wondered why these women became involved and stayed, especially when I observed them being treated unfairly by people who were supposedly 'experts' within our Education System.

The second part of this question looked at how experiences of *A'oga Amata* impacted on the multiple roles that women had to balance in their busy daily lives. Women were already heavily involved in family, church and other work

commitments hence, the role that they had as teachers at *A'oga Amata* was another role added to the multiple roles that they had.

## **Methodology**

This study used a qualitative research approach in which the lived experiences of seven Samoan women (including myself) were used as a resource to create meaning and understanding (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). I interviewed six Samoan women who were directly involved in the establishment of three licensed Samoan *A'oga Amata* in Christchurch. An autoethnographic method allowed me as the researcher to include my own life stories as well. The power of life stories helps us to know and understand issues of power that people experience (Delgado & Stefanic, 2012). This study revealed that *A'oga Amata* was a place for Samoan children (including all children), parents, teachers, families and the wider community for the reasons that shall be discussed next.

### ***A'oga Amata* as a place of cultural transmission**

All women involved in this study became involved in *A'oga Amata* because it became a place of cultural transmission where they could pass on *Fa'aSamoa* - the values, beliefs, knowledge and practices to their own children. Women had social motivators of fear, loss, discrimination; fearful that their children would lose their Samoan language, culture and identity and would also experience discrimination that they experienced as they migrated and settled in New Zealand. This supports research on issues that immigrant parents experience, in trying to retain their own cultural identity while raising their children within a context that is alien to where they have come from. Women were fearful that their children would lose the Samoan language, especially when the dominant language English was used in most of the educational settings and workplaces their families were part of. The sense of loss here was described as a deep hurt and wound that affected women. As Kirova (2006) argues, language, culture and place are intimately connected that shapes who we are and how we view the world. Samoan women could see that their own children risked losing their own language in New Zealand. This has serious implications for anyone who is at risk of losing their culture, identity, and traditional

values (Spolsky, 1988. pg. 16). *A'oga Amata* has been created for the survival of the Samoan language, culture, values and ideals; therefore it is vital for the language to be used more than 80% of the time for full immersion *A'oga Amata* and at least 50 % for bilingual centres (Hunkin-Tuiletufuga, 2001). Otherwise the language and cultural identity is at risk of becoming endangered even in spaces that have been created by minorities for minorities.

Western countries such as New Zealand are subsumed in the process of 'development' where indigenous and minority cultures are further oppressed and marginalised through forms of internal colonialism (Hall & Fenelon, 2009). This study revealed that that spaces that Samoan women created for their own people were hindered by colonial incursions within the programme. These incursions became noticeable when women had to comply with teaching qualifications and licensing regulations and this created social division that compromised the idea of community belonging. This undermined what *A'oga Amata* was created to be, as a culturally safe space undermining the very work that women created at the centre of the community. While *A'oga Amata* brought the Samoan community into a shared space, the Education system enforced new social boundaries and class differences at the same time. Samoan women nevertheless were protectors of this place of belonging for their Samoan children, families and community, by trying to resist *A'oga Amata* hiring qualified teachers that could not speak the Samoan language. Unfortunately, teachers that resisted were not able to stop management hiring teachers that were not fluent in the language due to legal regulations and pressures of obtaining and sustaining qualified teaching staff.

Language maintenance and language revitalisation at *A'oga Amata* was becoming a larger issue (Hunkin-Tuiletufuga, 2001). Centres that were supposed to be full immersion, could not maintain the language to a level of language maintenance or sustainability. Samoan women that were fluent in the language tried to protect the Samoan language used and encourage the use of *Fa'aSamoa* within their own centres. Unfortunately, some *A'oga Amata* ended up using the English language more than 50% of the time and employing teachers that could not speak the Samoan language. This was not a culturally safe space that reaffirmed Samoan identity, belonging or the values of *Fa'aSamoa*.

All women in this study had previously worked in low-skilled jobs before they became involved in *A'oga Amata*. They were part of the labour force as Fairbairn (1961) describes where Pasifika peoples filled the low-skilled jobs; creating a movement upward in the occupational hierarchy of the non-Pasifika workforce. Larner's (1989) study who looked at the participation of women in the workforce revealed that women were still concentrated in low-skilled areas. The increase in Pasifika peoples' taking on low skilled jobs came together with the negative stereotypes about Pasifika peoples and their status within the workforce and in society. This study supported research that revealed that immigrants to New Zealand experienced discrimination that impacted on what they wanted and did not want for their children and families (Department of Internal Affairs, 1996). Samoan women wanted their children to succeed by gaining a good education and a good job while maintaining their own Samoan identity. These experiences relate to the fear that immigrant parents have of their children having low skilled jobs and experiencing the negative discrimination and stereotypes that came with this territory (Mchitarjan & Reizenzein, 2014). Even though not all Samoan women openly talked about discrimination, their responses implied that they did experience this. For instance, *Samasama* talked about the goal for *A'oga Amata* being one that involved to "fight for our own people". To "fight" and "we are not stupid" echoes a counteracting statement towards stereotypes and discrimination of Pacific people in New Zealand that have historically been represented as unintelligent, unmotivated, unhealthy and criminal leading to disempowering experiences within the workforce as Pasifika migrants in New Zealand (Ongeley, 1991 & Larner, 1989).

### ***A'oga Amata* as a place of belonging**

This study revealed that *A'oga Amata* was also a place of belonging - an extension of the Samoan village and church for children, family and the Samoan community. Samoan women became involved in *A'oga Amata* as they aspired to *teu le vā* (look after the space) by protecting and guarding all that was precious and valued by Samoan peoples. Samoan families felt they had a 'place' of being included, accepted and valued, asserting Samoan values and identity within *A'oga Amata*. This

supported the implication that for Pasifika peoples, self-identity comes from being accepted and valued (Albrow, 1997) and connected with others (Phinney, 1990).

The Samoan metaphor *Teu le vā* was defined as a place or site of action in which social interactions are productive to those who are part of the place (Airini et al., 2010). It also means to keep or look after all the relationships within the space in a harmonious order (Mara, 2013). This study affirms that the *va* (space) of *A'oga Amata* was a site of action that was productive to the Samoan community where Samoan women aspired to *teu le vā* by protecting and guarding all that is precious and valued by Samoan peoples. The participation and involvement of parents at *A'oga Amata* gave them the opportunity to be with other parents from their church, participate and help out in the programme, learn new skills and develop their thinking about their children's education (Utumapu, 1996). However, this also came with the challenges in how to run an organisation and manage the people within the programme. When *A'oga Amata* became licensed and needed to comply with regulations, more women gained teaching qualifications and this put them on a different level with parents (Mara, 2006). One of the most challenging areas that women talked about was the guidance of children's behaviour. The clashes of parenting and teaching in regards to how children's behaviour was to be guided caused women to take a 'qualified teachers' approach so that parents could support ways that the centre promoted. Some women thought that what they had learnt during their studies was 'better' than the way that some of the parents interacted with their children relating to discipline. This 'place' of being included and accepted was hard when parenting styles clashed with teaching within *A'oga Amata*. Educating the Samoan way or the *Palagi* way were challenges that all women experienced. Women became in 'two minds' about what to teach and what was considered 'quality' teaching.

Many Pasifika researchers claim that without church support most of the *A'oga Amata* in New Zealand would not have been created or had survived (Ete, 1999; Burgess, 1988a; Tagoilelagi-Leota, 2010). This was also the case with *A'oga Amata* in Christchurch. All the women that were part of this study belonged to language nests and licensed *A'oga Amata* that were affiliated with churches that they belonged to. Churches were the backbone of the *A'oga Amata* movement in the North Island



(Burgess, 1998a) and this study reveals that churches were the backbone of *A'oga Amata* in Christchurch too. The church is seen to hold a central socialising role within the Samoan community in the ways it transmits aspects of *Fa'aSamoa* but also helps Samoan people settle in and belong in places such as *A'oga Amata* in New Zealand.

### **Samoan women as *poutu* of *A'oga Amata***

This study supports the research of Utumapu (1998) that affirms the important role of Samoan women as *poutu* – the strength of her family, of the church and *A'oga Amata*. Samoan women were able to work through challenges and stresses of everyday life to support church, family roles and work at *A'oga Amata*. *A'oga Amata* impacted on women's roles significantly as they became language activists and pioneers of new learning spaces. Leadership roles lifted women's own sense of status within the Samoan community as well as within New Zealand society.

Some researchers argue that cultural patriarchies within *Fa'aSamoa* did not exist prior to European contact (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1996, Meleisea & Meleisea, 1987). The *Matai* (Chief) system of *Fa'aSamoa* has continued with the main roles of women as 'mothers' and 'home maker' to the present time. The hierarchy within the system of *Fa'aSamoa* includes a specific place and status for mothers. All childcare, household chores and anything to do with raising children and organising the family fell on the role of the mother (Utumapu, 1998). The mother in the Samoan village leads and oversees everything that goes on in the home. However, family and village support that mothers received back home was something that was obviously missing in New Zealand as shared by women in this study.

Two women in this study talked about unequal power relations that involved their husbands not helping out with domestic chores around the house. What was striking in this study was that four women talked about their husbands taking on the roles of cooking and looking after children at school so that they could manage their roles better. The involvement of men in household tasks is something that is not traditional for men in Samoa; however the fact that more men are doing this suggests that there are shifts in the roles of men in New Zealand as well. What was also

noticeable from the data was that Samoan women in this study took on many roles that they struggled to balance at times. The fact that husbands were sharing the workload of household chores could also suggest that women decided to take on more roles. However, this sometimes involved unrealistic expectations for the women themselves, where some struggled to study, work, support commitments at home and church as well as teach at *A'oga Amata*. Once women gained teaching qualifications, they did not need to study and work an extra job, hence these roles became more manageable.

Samoan women had to balance the multiple roles they had. The *alofa* (love) that women had for their families and their children influenced the *tautua* (service) that they did for their families and their children. The love that they had for their parents was shown in the way they also chose to look after them here in New Zealand. With multiple roles came multiple responsibilities and expectations that some women referred to as being a 'real Samoan woman' who has to do everything for her family. Fairbairn-Dunlop (1986) argues that women's role as mother and wife is constantly being compromised and challenged by other roles as an income earner and roles within the family and community. Samoan women roles as 'mother' and 'wife' were passed down from their own mothers. The commitment and sacrifice that Samoan women made for their families show the values of *Fa'aSamoa* that encompass what is important to them as Samoan peoples (Luafutu-Simpson, 2006).

When *A'oga Amata* became licensed, women who started off as volunteers ended up being paid teachers. This not only lifted the status of women in regards to recognition of a skilled occupation but also entry into a professionally recognised sector of early childhood education. Women then had to become trained teachers to be able to teach within *A'oga Amata* and these also helped women to feel empowered as teachers. Larner (1989) found that Pacific women born overseas were over represented in the unskilled area of production and service work. *A'oga Amata* provided the opportunity for Samoan women to break from these unskilled jobs and enter the skilled workforce of teaching with qualifications that they valued.

Samoan women also experienced a shift within their family status. The role of 'teacher' was another role added to what women had to balance as *poutu*. At times

women struggled to be *poutu*, balancing the multiple roles that they had, however their successes became evident when they became qualified teachers and experienced the rewards that came with these qualifications later on. An increase in job wages and becoming the main breadwinner of families were some of the benefits that women experienced being qualified teachers. The status of having a tertiary qualification also added to the mana and status of the family and the family name (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1986). There was also a shift to the positions women had in their church as a result to their leadership roles at *A'oga Amata*. Even though women still had lower roles compared to men (Palenapa, 1993), women were gaining leadership roles in areas where children were involved.

This study used the basic tenets of critical race theory from Delgado and Stefaniec (2012) to understand and explain how Samoan women were part of experiences that included racial oppression. Therefore, this study argued that:

1. Samoan women experienced some form of prejudice, discrimination or racism within their daily lives and within their experiences of *A'oga Amata*.
2. The system of the dominant culture in New Zealand does not serve the interests of indigenous peoples including Maori and Pasifika. This means that Samoan women experience marginalisation due to the limited power they have (or do not have). *A'oga Amata* is a learning place that supports the Samoan language and culture, however this study revealed that colonial incursions do act as barriers to the values and philosophy of the environment.
3. The way that Samoan women are treated and what they experience is due to how people's views have been socially constructed.
4. Samoan women are marginalised by race, gender, social class and nationality. This study revealed how Samoan women experienced multiple oppressions. Sharing their stories is one way of giving these women a voice to their experiences.

### **Limitations of the study**

This study looked deeply at the perspectives of only 7 Samoan women that were involved in establishing three of the *A'oga Amata* in Christchurch, hence is only a small sample. Further research could include perspectives of more women and also

the perspectives of women that were involved in the other two licensed centres in Christchurch that were not included in this study.

I was the only New Zealand born Samoan woman compared to the six participants born in Samoa. It would be beneficial to get voices from other NZ born teachers that were involved even if the majority of women that were involved in setting up *A'oga Amata* in Christchurch were from Samoa; there may have been other NZ born women that were involved.

This study also is a snapshot in time when Samoan language nests were being set up and *A'oga Amata* were attaining their full licenses in Christchurch during the 1990s. It does not particularly focus on *A'oga Amata* today even though some of the participant's responses did refer to their current views as most are currently still teaching at *A'oga Amata*. What needs to be explored is the current situation at *A'oga Amata*. Have *A'oga Amata* been able to achieve their initial aspirations and goals in maintaining the Samoan language and culture? Are the issues that Samoan women experienced in establishing the centres still barriers today and if so, what can be done to support these centres? These types of questions lead to the following implications that have arisen from this study.

### **Implications**

This study clearly highlighted the need to maintain and strengthen local *A'oga Amata* in Christchurch (and other places that support diverse minority cultures) throughout the country as they are vital in strengthening Samoan language acquisition and cultural values. *A'oga Amata* has been created for the survival of the Samoan language, culture, values and ideals; therefore it is vital for the language to be used more than 80% of the time for full immersion *A'oga Amata* and at least 50 % for *A'oga Amata* bilingual centres (Hunkin-Tuiletufuga, 2001) for this to become a reality. Otherwise the language and cultural identity is at risk of becoming endangered even in spaces that have created by minorities for minorities.

The Education system and Pasifika community need to be aware of how social boundaries are enforced by the pressure of *A'oga Amata* to employ qualified staffs that are not fluent in the Samoan language. When Western countries are subsumed

in the process of ‘development’ then minority cultures are further marginalised through forms of internal colonialism (Hall & Fenelon, 2009). *A’oga Amata* needs to be supported to hire qualified teachers that are fluent in the Samoan language or support teachers to learn the language; otherwise the language cannot be maintained within programmes.

*A’oga Amata* is essential in developing a strong and secure identity for Samoan and Pasifika children. Tongati’o (2010) argues that Pasifika learners for too long have been shaped to fit the education system in New Zealand. “Co-constructing solutions with Pasifika learners, teachers, parents, families and communities in ways that shape successful learning as well as retaining values, identities and cultures might provide successful ways forward” (pg. 445). The way that Samoan women shaped the learning within their own centres to support children and families was evident. It is also vitally important that all policies, practices and learning are tailored to fit the Pasifika learner not just within early childhood education but within all sectors within our education system.

This study also revealed that *A’oga Amata* was a place of belonging, an extension of the Samoan village and church for children, family and the Samoan community. Samoan women became involved in *A’oga Amata* as they aspired to *teu le vā* (look after the space) by protecting and guarding all that was precious and valued by Samoan peoples. Samoan families felt they had a ‘place’ of being included, accepted and valued, asserting Samoan values and identity within *A’oga Amata*. This supported the implication that for Pasifika peoples, self-identity comes from being accepted, valued (Albrow, 1997) and connected with others at *A’oga Amata* (Phinney, 1990).

The Church needs to be recognised in the Education System as one of the main supports for immigrant children and families. Many Pasifika researchers claim that without church support most of the *A’oga Amata* in New Zealand would not have been created or survived (Burgess, 1988; Ete, 1999; Tagoilelagi-Leota, 2010). This was also the case with *A’oga Amata* in Christchurch. The church is seen to hold a central socialising role within the Samoan community in the ways it supports aspects of *Fa’aSamoa* and helps Samoan people settle and belong in New Zealand.

## Future research

The *A'oga Amata* movement has occurred in other areas of the world such as Australia and the United States where Pasifika peoples have established language nests to provide for their own children (Chambers, 2015). Research on *A'oga Amata* outside of New Zealand, is scarce but much needed. It is important to note that many Samoan churches around the world are more likely to have an *A'oga Amata* that is licensed or run by groups of parents as was the case for the women in this study.

What was also striking in this study was that four women talked about their husbands taking on the roles of cooking and looking after children at school so that they could manage their roles at *A'oga Amata* and church better. The involvement of men in household tasks is not traditional for men in Samoa; however the fact that more men are doing this in New Zealand suggests that there are shifts in the roles of Samoan men as well that can be researched further.

It was essential that Pasifika epistemologies and knowledges were at the forefront of this study hence Samoan epistemologies of *talanoa*, *teu le vā* and *Fa'aSamoa* made up the main Pasifika research paradigm used. Research on Feminism in the Pacific or by Pasifika women is limited and has either embraced, rejected or re-worked feminist theory. Even though Black feminism has been well received by women of colour, I personally found more of 'myself' in the theory of Womanism as it was a concept developed and used by black women for black and coloured women. While there have been a few early attempts to find a universal Pasifika feminist framework such as Marsh's Samoan term *Mana tama'ita'i*, it does show that Pasifika women do support feminist goals and values but have not found a framework that can be used by all Pasifika women (Marsh, 1998).

I propose a new theoretical lens 'Pasifika Womanism' that I would like to explore in future research. 'Pasifika Womanism' is a lens that can embrace Pasifika epistemologies and knowledges and the values of Womanism where Pasifika women can tell their own stories, start where they are and celebrate their multiple identities and in-betweenness of their being like the women in this study. This study looked at the creative ways that Samoan women navigated their way through the challenges

they faced to establish *A'oga Amata* in Christchurch. Further research can examine the new theoretical framework of 'Pasifika Womanism' to acknowledge and celebrate stories of Pasifika women nationally and internationally.

### **My new understanding**

As the researcher of this study, I have a deeper understanding and a wider appreciation for women that established *A'oga Amata* in New Zealand. As a NZ born Samoan I can relate to the perspectives of NZ born parents in the study by Luafutu-Simpson (2006) that did not feel safe or comfortable to participate in places that were 'more traditional or cultural', especially when they were not fluent in the Samoan language. I too had similar perspectives towards *A'oga Amata* and if it were not for my mother in law who took my daughter and then encouraged me to go to, I probably would not have become involved and would still have questioning views about these places of learning. I would highly recommend that NZ born parents take a look for themselves before making decisions not to involve their own children and families. After I started teaching at *A'oga Amata*, my aspirations for my own children to learn the language and culture became more of a priority, due to the strong sense of belonging and connectedness that my family experienced at *A'oga Amata*.

Five out of the seven women that participated in this study had taught at a number of *A'oga Amata* in Christchurch. For these women to work at more than one *A'oga Amata* was not mentioned in other literature reviewed for this study, so whether or not this 'centre switching' happens in other cities or in the north island needs to be further explored. This may be happening due to the lower numbers of qualified Samoan teachers in Christchurch but I propose that it is due to the close relationships and connections that have been formed in the Pasifika and Samoan community. These relationships and connections is certainly something that is special and unique to the Christchurch context that needs further investigation

Lastly, doing a study that included my own narratives has been a challenging yet empowering journey. It has been a place of uncertainty, critical reflection, healing, and self-acceptance and more importantly a place of celebration. I have grown considerably in my own knowledge, skills and confidence as a Samoan woman

researcher, due to my own experiences at *A'oga Amata* and of course the amazing Samoan women that took time to *talanoa* and gift their stories to this study.

## Conclusion

This chapter provided a summary of the main findings revealing how *A'oga Amata* was a place of cultural transmission, a place of belonging and a place where women were recognised and given higher status and confidence as *poutu* as they balanced multiple roles. The limitations and implications of this study highlighted areas that can be considered for further research and what can be explored further. Samoan women that established *A'oga Amata* were resourceful language activists that had aspirations to make a difference for their own children. Marginalised by race and culture, they overcame major barriers and challenges to create places that are an inspiration to the Samoan community. The *mana* that these women had, their resourcefulness and strength became an incentive and privilege for me (as a past teacher at *A'oga Amata*) to share their life stories. Most of the Samoan women that participated in this study were still teaching at *A'oga Amata* when this thesis was submitted, showing their commitment and loyalty to *teu le vā* (look after the spaces) and continue to be the *poutu* (main pole) that upholds all that is valuable to their children and family. They are an inspiration to the whole early childhood sector, Samoan and Pasifika community in New Zealand. This thesis began with my own narrative and will end with the narrative of one Samoan women that took part in this study. *Meamata's* words sum up so eloquently why this study was significant.

My culture and heritage has made me the woman I am today. I value education for our children so they can have a better future than their parents have had in the past. Like your parents who I know have worked hard to get you where you are today...I'm so proud to be a Samoan teacher that can teach the Samoan language, the culture of *Fa'aSamoa* so our children know who they are and where they come from. To see what we have done to build this place...it has not been easy for us women but here we are...our *A'oga Amata* is a blessing for us all. I hope that these blessings will continue to serve our children...so they can teach their own children to become strong leaders in the Samoan community and wherever they go (*Meamata*).



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## **APPENDIX 1: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

**Researcher: Jo Tогiaso**

Tel: +64 3667001 extn 3694

Email: Joeana.togiaso@canterbury.ac.nz

Address of Recipient

Date/Month/Year

Talofa lava: (Name of Recipient)



### **EXPERIENCES OF SAMOAN WOMEN THAT ESTABLISHED *A'OGA AMATA* IN CHRISTCHURCH**

There is an old Samoan saying ‘*tu’utu’u le upega i le loloto*’ which means to ‘cast your net into deeper waters’. In our islands of Samoa this was a good way to catch the meatiest and best fish called *tuamafa*. This fish is good enough to give to the *matai* (high chief) in the village or *faife’au* (minister) and considered food fit for any special occasion. Like our Samoan ancestors, I am casting my net into the deep waters of Pasifika Early Childhood education in Christchurch.

I believe that you are ‘*tuamafa*’ whom we can learn from. Your stories, your work, your histories, and the certain waters you swam in. I would like to study the experiences of Samoan women who founded *A’oga Amata* (Early Childhood Centres) in Christchurch as part of completing my MA in Education at the University of Canterbury.

I would like to conduct an interview/talanoa with you about your experiences. This will be conducted in a comfortable place of your choice and will last approximately 1 ½ hours. Please be assured that particular care will be taken to ensure the confidentiality of all data gathered and names will not be identified anywhere. All data will be securely stored in password protected facilities and/or locked storage. Please also note that participation in this research is voluntary and by invitation, where you can withdrawal from the project at any time. You will receive regular updates about the project, a summary of the data once the project is done and any publications as they arise.

Any complaints about this research can be addressed to:

Nicola Surtees, Chair,  
Educational Research Human Ethics Committee  
University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, CHRISTCHURCH  
Telephone: (03) 3667001

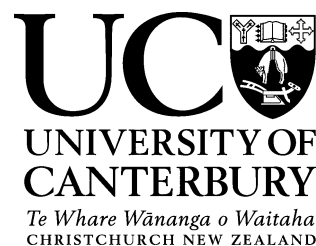
If you would like to take up this opportunity to participate please complete and return the consent form attached by (Day/Date/Month) in the envelope provided.

If you have any questions about this research, please do not hesitate to contact me.  
Thank you for considering this invitation to participate in my study.

Ia manuia,  
Jo Tогiaso  
[Joeana.tогiaso@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:Joeana.tогiaso@canterbury.ac.nz)  
University of Canterbury  
PH: 021 1582772

## **APPENDIX 2: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

**Researcher: Jo Tогiaso**  
Tel: +64 3667001 extn 3694  
Email: Joeana.tогiaso@canterbury.ac.nz



### **EXPERIENCES OF SAMOAN WOMEN THAT ESTABLISHED A'OGA AMATA IN CHRISTCHURCH**

#### **Declaration of Consent to Participate**

I have read and understood the information provided about this project.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time prior to dissemination of the findings.

I understand that any information or opinions I provide will be kept confidential

I understand that any published reports will not identify me and associated work places.

I understand that all data from this research will be stored securely for five years following the study and then destroyed.

I understand that I will receive updates and a summary on the findings of this study and have provided my email details below for this purpose.

By signing below, I agree to participate in this project.

Name:

Institution:

Date:

Signature:

Email address for report on study:

*(Note: email confirmation will be sent on receipt of your survey)*

***Please return this completed consent form in the envelope provided***

***by Day/Date/Month***

*Thank you for your contribution. I look forward to working with you on this exciting project.*

*Ia manuia,*

*Jo Tогiaso*



### **APPENDIX 3: BACKGROUND INFORMATION FORM**

Please write you answers in the space provided or tick the boxes. If you need more space you can write on the back of the pages.

1. Country village/ city you were born? \_\_\_\_\_

If you were not born in N.Z what year did you first come? \_\_\_\_\_

2. In what country were your parents born?

Father: \_\_\_\_\_

Mother: \_\_\_\_\_

If your parents were not born in N.Z what year did they come to N.Z? (Leave blank if they did not come to N/Z) \_\_\_\_\_

3. Your religion is:

Anglican	[ ]	Catholic	[ ]	Congregational	[ ]
Methodist	[ ]	Mormon	[ ]	Pentecostal	[ ]
Presbyterian	[ ]	Seventh Day Adventist	[ ]		
Other	[ ]	No church affiliation	[ ]		

4. If you are affiliated with a church how would you describe your attendance?

Weekly	[ ]
Monthly	[ ]
Yearly	[ ]
Only on special occasions	[ ]

5. If you are a Christian but do not attend church please tick [ ]

6. Please tick which age group your are in:

15-20	[ ]	20-29	[ ]	30-39	[ ]	40-49	[ ]	50-59	[ ]	60- 70	[ ]
70+	[ ]										

7. Which country/countries were you educated? \_\_\_\_\_

My primary schooling was completed in \_\_\_\_\_

My secondary schooling was completed in \_\_\_\_\_

My tertiary education is currently at/completed (circle) \_\_\_\_\_

8. What year did you begin at *A'oga Amata*? \_\_\_\_\_

9. How long were you there for? \_\_\_\_\_

10. What role/roles did you undertake? \_\_\_\_\_

11. Do you have any children, if so number/age/gender \_\_\_\_\_

12. Are you married/have a partner Y/N

13. What is the occupation/ roles that your husband/partner have? \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX 4: TALANOA/INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

### **1. Profile of Informants**

- You have mentioned that you are from Samoa village.../ born in N.Z... Why did you come to Christchurch? How long have you lived in Christchurch?
- Describe your role at entry to *A'oga Amata* and current role (mother, wife, sister, occupation, community positions etc).

### **2. Reason for getting into *A'oga Amata***

- What made you get involved in ECE/*A'oga Amata*/Language Nest? (reasons for becoming involved) Probes: family situation? Family expectations? Who/what influenced you? What were your hopes at the start?
- Was this decision different from other females in your family?
- What do you think the main purpose of *A'oga Amata* is?

### **3. Initial/First experiences**

- What are your vivid memories of your first month of being involved in *A'oga Amata*? Did you know other people there? What was your role? Did you have an induction? What challenged you? What supported you?

### **4. Continuation of work/roles in *A'oga Amata***

- What were your roles for the rest of your first year? Second? Onwards?
- What challenged and supported you?

### **5. Multiple roles**

- What other roles did you have outside the *A'oga Amata*? Probes: family, church, community
- How did these roles impact on your work at *A'oga Amata*? What challenged you? What supported you?

### **6. Knowledge/Education**

- Do you have any teaching background experience/qualifications?
- How do you think this (quals/experience) has impacted on your teaching within *A'oga Amata*?
- What do you think the main purpose for *A'oga Amata* is?
- What is your own teaching philosophy/values?

### **7. Influence of *Fa'aSamoa***

- How do you think *Fa'aSamoa* impacts on your role as a Samoan woman and the different roles that you have? Probes: What are some Samoan values that are important to you as Samoan women teaching/roles you have in the community/as a mother etc.

### **8. Future hopes for *A'oga Amata***

- What are your dreams and hopes for the future of *A'oga Amata*?
- What needs to be done for this to happen?